METRO / A26

No patients in this 'Recovery Room' in Alabang, only diners

SPORTS / A29

Miñoza settles for 3-way tie for 2nd in Indonesian Open

ACROSS / A17

Soldiers' votes seen to be used against party-lists

LIFESTYLE / C1

Foreign 'rondalla' groups in Dumaguete for RP Arts Festival

Angara feels sure he won't get cheated

By GIC. Cabreregan Jr.

IT SOUNDS UNGRATEFUL but senatorial candidate Edgardo Angara says it is true.

Angara said he believed his chances of winning in the May 14 elections had

ANGARA, A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, February 19, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 73 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

DOJ: No legal problem if nurses retake exam

By Leila B. Salaverria and Nikko Dizon

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ THINKS there is no legal problem if the government complies with the requirement that those who passed the June 2006 nursing licensure exam be made to retake the exam and retain Tests 2 and 3 before they are allowed to work in the United States.

"If the Professional Regulation Commission

DOJ, A22

'Allow Erap to campaign'

Recto, Pichay: Bet needs at least ₱120M

By Michael Lim Ubac

DAVAO CITY—MONEY, LOTS OF IT, CAN determine the outcome of the senatorial race, according to two members of the administration's Team Unity slate.

Reelectionist Sen. Ralph Recto and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. told reporters while campaigning at Gaisano Mall here that a senatorial candidate was allowed to raise P120 million and the party could give him or her an additional P60 million each to attain a winnable mark.

Recto, Team Unity's richest senatorial candidate with a declared net worth of P260 million in 2005, said the P120 million was the limit imposed by the Commission on Elections.

But Pichay said the administration's 12-member ticket could spend an additional P60 million for each candidate, for a total of P300 million each.

"If you really want to go mainstream, you go as high as P300 million," said Pichay, pointing out that each candidate could spend P3 to P5 for about 40 million voters nationwide.

The Comelec has set the spending limit for a senatorial candidate at P3 for each registered voter. A political party and an independent candidate can spend P5.

RECTO, A22

DESPITE tight security, some of the candidates of the opposition got their chance to be endorsed personally by former President Joseph Estrada at his mother's home in Greenhills, San Juan, Sunday. From left (front row) are Aquilino Pimentel III, Loren Legarda, Nikki Coseteng, and (second row) are Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, chair of the United Opposition, Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino, Francis Escudero and Panfilo Lacson.

UNP

Opposition to file plea in Sandigan

By Christian V. Esguerra

LAWYERS OF FORMER PRESident Joseph Estrada are set to file a motion before the Sandiganbayan today seeking his release from house arrest to allow him to campaign for the Genuine Opposition, GO spokesperson Adel Tamano announced yesterday.

"Obviously, he's frustrated because he wants to be part of this process," Tamano said. "President Estrada, who is presumed innocent, has the right to participate in the constitutional process."

Tamano said Estrada should be allowed to receive opposition officials, candidates with photo opportunities, and even join campaign sorties.

"We should remember that even if he was not allowed to post bail, the restrictions on bail, under the law and the Constitution, were lax to prevent him from leaving," he claimed. "We all know that he won't leave. So there's no reason whatsoever not to let him campaign. We all know that he won't run away."

Estrada, whose trial for plunder just ended six years after a military-backed "people power" revolt cut short his rule,

ALSO SNAP, A11

Melo report: Saga of a breach in transparency

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

WHEN PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo ordered the release last week of the much-awaited Melo Commission report on the death squad killings, it caused no little amount of disappointment that Malacañang announced that copies would be released only to the European Union and the United Nations.

The report will not be released to the Filipino people, who are the victims of the extrajudicial executions which have claimed more than 800 lives of political activists since 2001. The Philippine media will have no access. Mr. Arroyo does not trust the Filipino media and has a running feud with them. With this, Filipinos have been denied the fundamental right to know what's behind the most atrocious wave of political murders since the Marcos dictatorship.

The implications of this exclusive international release is that the President has ignored that her primary accountability is to the Filipino people, not to international public opinion.

MELO REPORT, A20

News stories by the youth for the youth

By Ellen Wong
Contributor

DRESSED IN JEANS, PINK T-SHIRT AND bright sequined shoes, 19-year-old Apple Bide jumps up and down holding a microphone.

Wearing a yellow top and a neon lemon headband, Nissi de Guzman, 17, hops her headphone-wrapped head to music only she can hear.

For his part, Angelo Supe, 19, his hair dyed and spiked, counts down with his fingers: five, four, three, two, one...

"Welcome to Kalasanan X-Perez! Ang programang gawa ng kabataan para sa kabataan: the program produced by the youth for the youth!," Bide says to the camera and smiles.

NEWS STORIES, A11

WELCOME HOME, HEROES
President Macapagal-Arroyo can't hide her happiness as she welcomes to Malacañang Saturday night the 24 Filipino seamen who were freed after being held hostage in Nigeria. The families of the workers were also on hand to welcome them back.

WHEN THE STATE IS THE TERRORIST

'They're supposed to be our protectors'

HIPOLITO Asuncion with Melissa's wife Maribel and daughter Lyka.

By Pinche Zoe Sanchez and Jamir Mira Ocampo
(First of two parts)

(Editor's note: Sanchez is assistant professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman working on her Ph.D. in Sociology; Ocampo is with the UP School of Economics. The two were invited by Tarpuan, an ecology group in the Cagayan Valley, to study the impact of a military presence as a form of terrorism. Following is their report.)

"PALIWAN ATO DI KAMI LIKOD ku pinatay sa clip mapupuyan nga bata!" (Better still, kill us all

T-TEAM Report
Fernando del Mundo
Lead

You have just killed my only son!)" the old man cried to us guards as he cradled his dying son Nelson Asuncion in his arms.

Bleeding from M16 and M14 bullet wounds, Nelson made his last wish for his father Hipolito to take care of his family—his wife Maribel and 5-year-old daughter Lyka.

Asuncion, 18, Sangguniang Kabataan chair of Barangay San Juan, Zinundungan Valley that became the 82nd victim of extrajudicial killings, according to Karapatan, a human rights group (2nd to the Bayanan county, since President Macapagal-Arroyo became president in 2001.

The elder Asuncion pointed to Lt. Marcelo Ducca, Alpha company commander of the 21st Infantry Battalion (IB), as the man primarily responsible for the death of his son, a daily companion who helped him plow the fields and shared with him the hardships of peasant life.

He talked with a fast-failing

THEY'RE, A20

Antiterrorism bill 101

By Dl Yap, TJ Burgonio and Nancy Carvajal

LAWYER MARIA ROCOMORO Oñate cites a hostage-taking incident to illustrate what is fair in the consideration of the antiterrorism bill that is likely to overcome its final hurdle in Congress today before it is sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo to be signed into law.

The Senate version of the bill was adopted earlier this month by the bicameral conference committee. The Senate later passed the bill. Today the House is scheduled to

ANTITERRORISM, A20

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
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SUPERLOTTO 6/49
14 16 17 20 21 27
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Second
FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Lower portions of Central and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with occasional rain and thunderstorms, while the rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

Manila	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with rain
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with rain
Dagupan	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with rain
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Cotabato	Cloudy with rain
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cdo. Norte	Cloudy with rain
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Cdo. Sur	Cloudy with rain
Puerto Princesa	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with rain
Tacloban	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga Sib.	Cloudy with rain
Catarman	Partly cloudy	Surigao	Cloudy with rain

Complete list and Metro Manila weather forecast on page A2

Robust economic growth seen in '07

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY IS EXPECTED TO enjoy robust growth in 2007—provided the perennial problem of politics does not get in the way, analysts say.

A raft of positive economic figures in recent weeks and the passage of the P1.13-trillion national budget have been greeted positively by international investors.

The California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) recently raised its rating of the Philippines, placing it above China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in terms of the economies in which it invests.

With an investment portfolio valued at $194 billion, CalPERS is the largest pension fund in the United States.

"This positive development is expected to encourage global fund managers to increase investments in the country as they take their cue from a global leader in the investment industry," Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said.

Stable inflation and interest rates, a stronger currency and improved investor confidence are reflected in portfolio investment trends all point to better prospects for the economy, a recent report by the Institute for Development and Econometric Analysis (IDEA) said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index has worth hit levels last seen before the Asian financial crisis 10 years ago.

Remittances by some eight million overseas Filipino workers last year rose 19.4 percent from 2005 to a record $13.6 billion. This year remittances are expected to top $14 billion, according to a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said he was confident gross domestic product growth (GDP) this year would grow at 6.1-6.7 percent, compared to 5.4 percent in 2006.

The budget for 2007 should see an increase in spending on infrastructure and services, which are expected to jumpstart economic activity, Neri said.

This is only the third budget President Macapagal-Arroyo has ever passed since she came to power in 2001.

Under Philippine law, if the budget is not passed by Congress, the government is forced to invest in the previous budget.

Last year, for example, the government had to reinstate its 2005 budget, which limited its ability to increase spending on much-needed infrastructure projects, schools and social services.

But the slowdown in government spending did have a positive impact on the deficit, which last year fell to 196.2 billion, less than the 208 billion target ceiling for the year.

The government intends to limit its budget deficit this year to 193 billion.

Even the private sector is bullish.

Jaime Augusto Zobel, chair of Ayala Corp., one of the country's largest conglomerates, said "the fundamentals are in place for sustained economic recovery and growth."

"Key sectors of the economy are generating opportunities that are creating multiplier effects on other industries," he said in his company's annual report for 2006.

But while the budget problem seems to be out of the way, political instability remains.

Mr. Arroyo is facing congressional and local elections in May, which are widely seen as a referendum on her administration.

Campaigning is expected to be fierce, raising concerns the government will start giving out cash to win votes. AFP

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'Buoyed' Team Unity hits Davao after Cebu launch

By Michael Lim Ubac

DAVAO CITY—BUOYED BY THE ENDORSement of President Macapagal-Arroyo, Team Unity hit the campaign trail yesterday, the candidates flying together to Davao City in west Mindanao-ovens.

The team left Cebu City barely a day after President Arroyo personally proclaimed all 12 senatorial bets inside a packed Cebu Coliseum.

The midday scorching heat greeted members of the administration's senatorial ticket at the Davao International Airport, still they lost no time in mustering to a hotel restaurant where they met with hundreds of local officials led by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles.

While some administration senatorial candidates settled for the usual motorcade, radio-listener Senators Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto and Alfredo Angara, and Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. had something else in mind.

All four had their individual strategems to attract the attention of bystanders.

Biker Ralph

Recto got on a big motorcycle—a yellow Honda—and made his way to the Davao area along the highway selling durian, the prickly fruit known for its distinctive taste and odor.

Recto invited his colleagues Arroyo—who opted to ride in a taxi—in and they chartan and partake. The latter obliged.

"Pampalakas ng sahod (for stronger knees)," Recto said.

A festive mood filled the airport as hundreds of supporters, including motorcycle-riding members of the Kabalikatan Bukid-ang Manggagawa Inc. (Kabamin), Alyansa ng mga Grabe (Karaoke), welcomed Pichay.

The stars renewed Pichay to the diamond Gym where they inducted their new diversees and regional advisers.

Pichay supporters

Kamayan is one of the country's largest socialistic organizations claiming over 1.2 million Filipino bikers as members.

Kamayan president, Tagum City business magnate Cesar Barrera, said the group was fully behind Pichay.

Pichay said Kamayan was a "very strong organization" in Mindanao and the Visayas. "This is an organization that touches the hearts of ordinary people. Their purpose is to help those in distress, particularly in times of natural disasters and emergency," he said.

The soldiers took the usual route of stopping candidates, visiting markets and malls, where they perused the flesh, hugged babies and signed autographs.

Angara discusses

Angara opted to stay out of crowded places, concentrating on reaching out to sectoral groups by conducting discussions with various citizens, youths and students.

All 12 candidates converged at 7 p.m. at Hotel Park Inn for another proclamation rally.

Tourism Secretary Joe Durano, campaign spokesperson, said the proclamation rally held in Cebu showed the "strong bond among" the candidates.

'Strength in diversity'

He said that everyone on the slate promised not just his or her candidacy but that of the other members of the team, dispersing "resonate that the presence of candidates from different persuasion and affiliations would not add up to a unity of purpose."

"On the contrary, there is strength in diversity when it is unity in a shared vision for the country," he said.

He observed that the Cebu proclamation was "highly successful" despite the absence of entertainers who had rescheduled political gatherings in the past.

"We are trying to make campaign more relevant to the people, because we know that our voters would appreciate a serious presentation of issues which Team Unity is focusing on," Durano said.

"At the same time, the manner of campaigning shows that Team Unity's strength does not rely on financial resources but more on its wide and deep network of support among local officials and the citizenry," he added.

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UN prober asks about Davao death squad

By Jeffrey M. Tupas and Gerardine Lucero
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—PHILIP ALSTON, the UN Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, yesterday questioned authorities here about the alleged shadowy group Davao Death Squad (DDS) blamed for a number of killings of suspected criminals.

Lawyer Alberto Lipana, director of the Commission on Human Rights Southern Mindanao, said his meeting with Alston covered wide-ranging issues.

"He asked us whether or not the DDS indeed exists but I told him and his group that our investigation is ongoing, that the presence of a vigilante group is just a floating perception. There is no formal evidence that would point that the DDS, as a group liquidating suspected criminals, is real," Lipana told the Inquirer.

Maj. Randall Caluagbaang, spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command who met with Alston, confirmed the UN rapporteur's concerns about the reports of DDS activity.

"He wanted to know what the authorities were doing to stop the group," Caluagbaang said.

Earlier, Senior Supt. Jaime Sheerer, city police chief, denied the existence of the DDS.

He said all the evidence that the police have was able to gather on the spate of killings in the city pointed to gangwars and syndicates as the authors.

"There is just no proof that that group is real. All the evidence we gathered to gang wars," Sheerer said.

Also yesterday, a group of indigenous leaders staged a rally in front of the Inner Alston Alston was meeting with local officials on an illegal complaints against the Army's Alston behind the killing of their leaders.

Palace raps Villar over PMA speech

AFTER WARNING THAT THE ELEC-tions would "bring out the worst" in the candidates, Malacañang yesterday ratified reelectionist Senate President Manuel Villar for using the founding ground of the country's future military leaders as a venue for politicking.

In his weekly commentary published in another daily, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said: "Senate President Manuel Villar could have chosen a more appropriate forum for partisan overtures than the Philippine Military Academy. We only wish that more prudence is observed by our leaders, leaving politics to the politicians and soldiery to the soldiers."

In his speech during the PMA homecoming in Baguio City Saturday, Villar called on the military to be "apolitical" and not allow themselves to be used in the elections. Villar also criticized the "short cut" taken by the administration to railroad Charter change through Congress.

"This government has taken every opportunity to politicize[sic] and modernize the Armed Forces and to weaken the institution from politics, and we believe that all institutional leaders must stand breakwaters in this effort," said Bunye.

He said the military had to banish full dealing with terrorists and insurgents that it did not "send teenagers from our leaders that only pull their attention away from their primary mission."

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Labor group insists it is eligible to run in polls

By Jerome Aning

THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF THE Philippines yesterday appealed to the Commission on Elections to allow it to run for a seat in the House of Representatives in the May 14 elections as a party-list group.

TUCP spokesperson Alex Aguilar argued that TUCP only registered as a sectoral party on Jan. 2, 2004, and that it was only in the May 2004 elections that the TUCP participated in the party-list polls.

"Therefore, it appeared our status as a registered party-list group. While it's true that the TUCP failed to win in 2004, it was only that year when TUCP participated in the party-list polls," Aguilar said in his protest in a phone interview.

The TUCP was among the 35 party-list groups disqualified by the Comelec for failing to win and/or field candidates in the last two elections.

Under Republic Act No. 7941, or the Party-list System Act of 1995, a party-list group will lose its accreditation if it fails to participate in two consecutive elections or fails to obtain at least two percent of all votes cast under the party-list system in two consecutive elections.

The TUCP filed a motion for reconsideration on Feb. 14 seeking a reversal of the Comelec ruling disallowing the group in this year's polls.

"We are appealing to the Comelec to give recognition to TUCP considering that our workers, being a truly marginalized sector, need a lot of representation in the legislature," Aguilar said.

The TUCP party-list group is enrolled from the merger in 2006 of seven labor groups—the Workers' Alliance Trade Unions (Partial), All Trade Union Congress Party (ATUCP) and the National Congress of Unions of the Sugar Industry of the Philippines (Nacusip).

Aguilar said that with the merger, the organizational base of seven, all TUCP-affiliated unions will be enrolled and a new one-seat slate for TUCP.

"We realized that it was a mistake to launch as multiple parties as we merged to form a single party which was separately registered," he said, adding that with the merger, TUCP was able to improve its performance in 2004 when its group received more than 200,000 votes.

"It is consequently clear that the TUCP as a party-list organization, is separate and distinct from its predecessor organizations; it would be erroneous to tally the election record of the said predecessor organizations to the TUCP," the group said.

Undaunted by the ruling, Aguilar admitted that many TUCP members "felt bad" and their enthusiasm had dampened.

He called on the Comelec to act quickly on the motion because the TUCP still intended to participate in the elections this year and had in fact launched a wider campaign and prepared its "ground troops."

The TUCP, a moderate labor group founded in 1975, claims a membership of more than half of all organized workers in the industry. It has more than 50 affiliated labor federations from the industrial and agricultural sectors.

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News stories by the youth for the youth

Pole, De Guzman and Lupo are reporters for "Sabado X-Press," a weekly television program where 14- to 19-year-old youths write, narrate and shoot their own stories on video.

The three teenagers are part of the Manila bureau and among 200 reporters in 10 bureaus nationwide, which include Baguio, Cebu and Camarines Norte.

"Sabado X-Press is all about young people speaking freely. Free from advertising constraints and the opinions of adults, we get to choose our stories," explains Pole, a broadcast communication student.

The program is the latest project funded by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) with grants from the Australian and Canadian governments.

Unicef works with Dolce Media Foundation Inc. (DMFI), which provides the media training for the young reporters.

Last Saturday, "Sabado X-Press," which was previously shown on ABC-5, aired for the first time on ABS-CBN.

Super heroes?

The show is the brainchild of the Unicef chief communications officer, Pale Sequia, who introduced it to the public in the Philippines.

"Sabado X-Press" very powerfully and visibly demonstrates the right of children to express their opinions on issues that affect them. The role models provided will hopefully send a signal to kids that they can ask questions, that they can explore why things are happening. They won't feel that the world is for the adults and they have the right and they have nothing to say about it," Sequia says.

Catherine Colmenares, "Sabado X-Press" director who is also with the DMFI, says the program is a new idea. "Usually on TV, children are people who are the subject of physical abuse. This is the only show that allows young people to participate. We are giving the kids power to tell their stories," she says.

The young reporters, who are students at the University of the Philippines, all want to work in media-related fields.

For De Guzman, a film student, this was not always the case.

"When I was young I wanted to be a superhero," she says. "But recently I was like, hey—I kinda am. I'm superhero because we are voicing out opinions of the youth!"

Amazing stories

Colmenares is amazed by the stories the young team are working on.

"It's not just hip stuff. They tackle issues like teen prostitution, juvenile justice, street children, HIV/AIDS and child labor," she says.

The children's stories have already won several awards.

"Salbahe," which deals with corporal punishment during block break and written by last-year reporter Jacinth Mendoncillo, 19, won a Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan award in the 2005 Ifest Film Festival.

Pole's story, "Juvenile Justice," was the only work by a young person to get special mention at the 2006 Ito Ang Tunay Na Buhay.

De Guzman is working on "Music Group," which is a project for the freshmen of Sosiograpiks, a student choir to his heart.

Pole, De Guzman and Lupo get very excited when the bureaus are mentioned.

"We get to learn about different cultures, different kinds of people, and what's happening in different parts of the country," he Baldonado says.

The program readers note that the reporters come from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Approximately 30 percent of the young reporters are from other regions.

Bichile explains: "The research shows that a lot of young people feel disappointed. Many feel that their only option is to go to another country. The purpose of this is to tell stories of life on the world's most powerful media will mean that ordinary children, Christian, Muslim, different regions, different backgrounds, can believe in what they can accomplish."

Now heard

Asked to talk about their work, Bite says: "The stories are like our babies. They come from our blood and sweat."

"Sabado X-Press" regrets signing the Antiterror Bill, but the hosts for journals and the driver to pursue courses in journalism.

Together with hundreds of hopefuls, Pole, De Guzman and Lupo went to cards on who they wanted to work in their media. After they were shown, they attended a one-day intensive workshop and they were off and running.

Colmenares hopes this on the job training will mean "a new breed" of socially conscious and bright media practitioners.

She says the media environment at "Sabado X-Press" is just like any newsroom. "We don't supervise it for the kids. They have to learn to submit high quality work and on time."

Pole, for example, is pursuing news and the TV program, but De Guzman and Lupo are doing a juggling act. They must three times a week after school to work on their stories.

"Where we're together, it's pretty crazy due to the amount of a certain reporters," Pole says, nudging Lupo, a film student.

Lupo grins and says: "When we finish a story, it's off to the parties!" and points to his cut-rolled hair.

De Guzman says how stories have become a family affair. "They have this topic at home with all my episodes—and I like it. During family gatherings, they make everyone watch it. So embarrassing! Of course, I know they are really proud of me."

The stories, the 2007 Mass Media from the University of Sydney is doing her internship in the bureau.

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'Nene': Vote wisely, not just for actors

By Christian V. Esguerra

WITH THE ADMINISTRATION fielding yet another actor in its ticket, Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. yesterday said it was time for Filipinos to vote more wisely.

"This time around, I think the people should consider serious voter decision," he told reporters before joining opposition leaders for a luncheon meeting with Former President Joseph Estrada in Greenhills, San Juan.

Pimentel was asked to comment on the candidacy of actor-director Cesar Montano who was drafted in the last minute in the administration's Team Unity.

He was Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III is running for the Senate in the provincial opposition slate.

The elder Pimentel has spent nine in the Senate with two actors since 2004—Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Lito Lapid. He said some of them "did not perform well."

Revilla and Lapid both also ran and were in the administration slate.

Pimentel remained tapidly amidst response to media questions about his qualifications for legislative work.

Asked what bills he had passed, Lapid progressively replied: "Hindi nga ako nakapasa ng high school, magpapasa pa ng bills. O wow! ehh si pare high school graduate ka ba? Graduate ka?"

"I'm not belittling him [but] that's what he told me," Pimentel said.

But the veteran senator declined that he was not generalizing about actors who may want to involve public office.

"Whether you're an actor or non-actor, it's your performance that will determine your future," he said.

In the case of Montano, Pimentel said that Bohol Gov. Edgar Chatto might have worked for the actor's inclusion in the senatorial slate so they wouldn't have to think for the top provincial support in the municipalities.

"I won't rule out [Chatto's] role in this [but] also principally because it not... which was a good political move on his part," he said.

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Lapids, Pinedas to hold separate Team Unity rallies

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THERE WILL BE two separate pro-administration political events in Pampanga tomorrow because of disunity in President Macapagal-Arroyo's home province.

The buzz is that Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid of the ruling Lakas-CMD party did not invite Board Member Lilia Pineda, head of Aroyo's Kilusang Mabuhay ng Maunlang Pilipino (Kampi), to join the rally at the Rizal 2 Gazoo Convention Center where the 12 senatorial candidates of the administration's Team Unity will be introduced later Tuesday.

Pineda, wife of alleged jueteng lord Bong Pineda, is running against Lapid's ina Mahi for the gubernatorial seat in Pampanga. Both belong to pro-administration parties.

Interestingly Edgardo Pamintuan, coordinator of the Lapids in Bulacan's super region and a member of the Lakas-CMD national directorate, confirmed the decision of the Lapids to exclude the Pinedas.

"Being the host and the highest elected in Pampanga, Lapid will call the shots. Perfect pairs and groups will be [selected] at his discretion," Pamintuan told the Inquirer on Sunday.

Pamintuan said Executive Arroyo would only endorse the members of Team Unity in the rally and not one of the local candidates in her home province.

Pineda yesterday confirmed that she had not been asked to attend the administration rally.

She would, instead, proceed with her plan to celebrate her 50th birthday with a Mass—co-celebrated by San Fernando Archbishop Pa-

JDV says he's glad to have opposition

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LINGAYEN CITY—AFTER ROBBING HIMself to the past elections, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. now faces two opponents from political parties allied with the administration in his own district in Pangasinan.

But De Venecia said he won't invoke the expiry of the incumbent's rule, which prevents the selection of administration bets to other areas, because "it is tomorrow without [an] opponent."

"It is ideal when I stop running unopposed. Game ko naman mag-kalaban o may mga kalaban. (I want to have an opponent or opponents this time). I have run without opposition for three terms. It was very lonely," De Venecia, who represents the fourth district of Pangasinan, told reporters here on Monday.

Dagupan City Mayor Benjamin Lim and former Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao, new administrators of the Nacionalista Party in Administration, are reportedly eyeing a run for De Venecia's seat.

But De Venecia remained confident of retaining. "When you have served the people well, when you have delivered more than what was expected, you are confident."

A recent poll survey commissioned by De Venecia showed him ahead of Lim by 66 percent if elections were held at the time of the survey period [from Jan. 16 to Feb. 2].

The results showed De Venecia getting an overall rating of 63 percent against Lim's 17 percent.

The survey conducted by the Metro Manila-based Pedero Research and Consultancy Inc., used a sample base of 565 respondents from this city and the towns of Binmaley, San Jacinto, San Fabian and Mangaldan.

Lomibao was not included in the survey since it was conducted before he announced his plan to run for Congress.

But Lim's candidacy was not yet definite.

In an earlier interview, Lim said he was looking forward seeking reelection and running for representative.

"I am faced with the appeal of Dagupan residents [to run for mayor], but also with the clamor of the people outside the city who want change. We are weighing things carefully," he said.

In the race for the governorship of Pangasinan, De Venecia said there was also a possibility that the province would be declared a free zone.

At least three candidates allied with the administration were eyeing the position. They are Amado Espino Jr., wife of outgoing Gov. Nilma Aglipay-Espino; Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino, provincial chair of Lakas-CMD; and Rep. Amado Espino Jr., a member of Kampi, President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.

De Venecia said a national administration committee of the parties belonging to the administration coalition would try to resolve the issue.

"It will either be a free zone or one will be chosen and the rest will follow," he said.

Militants brand movie on Abu Sayyaf US propaganda

By Alcuin Papa

A MUSLIM CIVIC FEDERATION headed as "El propaganda" a Hollywood filmmaker's plan to produce a movie on the Abu Sayyaf Islamist group.

"It's propaganda and a pro-war movie aimed at justifying the Iraqi and Afghanistan[?] and unilateral intervention in the domestic affairs of the country," said Dony Albert Corpuz, information officer of Bantayog Laloy ng Dilang Hinusmanlakaya ng Pilipinas (bmnlakbay).

He said it will "promote the US war on terror and amplify its (US) tagging of the Philippines as the second front for US military aggression."

Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer—whose films credits include Armageddon and Pirates of the Caribbean—bought the screen rights to "Shadow in Paradise," an article written by Mark Rossiter for the Atlantic Monthly, said Alaniza Commission in Mindanao.

Rossiter reported that Bowden, author of the best-selling book "Black Hawk Down," was chosen to write the screenplay for the movie.

Bantayog said the movie should also take into account the alleged collusion of the rebels with some Filipino military generals and political warlords.

"If Bruckheimer really wants to, he can film on the Abu Sayyaf, he would also take into account the alleged collusion of the Abu Sayyaf with some top brass of the AFP and political warlords in the South, particularly the kidnap-for-ransom activities of the group where top military and local government officials were involved and received shares of ransom money from the bandits," Corpuz said.

He said Bruckheimer must include the fact that the Abu Sayyaf was "created" by the US to undermine the Moro people's quest for self-determination and divided and ruled them in the process.

"He hope the Hollywood film would also take into account that the AFP had used the exploits of the Abu Sayyaf as a rallying point to justify bombings, human rights operations in Mindanao and yearly requests for a high military budget," Corpuz said.

"Shadow in Paradise" details the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf and one of its leaders, Aldam Tilao.

Tilao put his group on the map in 2001 by wreaking by boat into a diving resort in Palawan and taking 20 hostages, including three Americans.

One of the Americans, Guillermo Sobero, was later beheaded. The other Americans, missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham, were rescued but Martin was killed by a stray bullet during the raid.

Tilao was eventually tracked down and killed after a long search by the US and Filipino military forces. —With Reuters, AFP

VIRGIN COCONUT OIL TO AFRICA
The Republic of The Gambia celebrated its 42nd National Day yesterday calling to mind the state visit of President Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh (left) to the Philippines in 2005, shown here at Malacañang with President Macapagal-Arroyo and Gambia's honorary consul in Manila Agnes Hallowell (right). Among other items, the Philippines hopes to market virgin coconut oil in Gambia to complement President Jammeh's herbal healing program for HIV and other ailments in his country.

US to focus on good works

AMERICAN TROOPS WILL BUILD SCHOOLS, roads and undertake other civic projects as part of the annual joint "Balikatan" exercises launched Sunday in Mindanao aimed at fighting grassroots support for the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group, United States military officials said.

While past Oplan had involved up to 5,000 US soldiers, only about 600 were on hand for the Feb. 26-March 4 maneuvers that will focus on humanitarian projects on Jolo island, the officials said.

"We know that terrorists here get some support from the local population, but that terrorist support continues to decrease with more humanitarian projects," said Maj. Arlie Bedford, a spokesperson for the US contingent.

"We are seeing more and more people coming forward with information against the terrorists, and we only see encouraging people to continue to do that," he told The Associated Press.

He also cited recent battlefield successes for declining support for the Abu Sayyaf, who authorities say number about 400 on the predominantly Muslim island of Jolo.

Aside from helping repair a 2.5-mile road, the American troops will renovate school buildings and clinics on Jolo. In nearby Tipo-Tipo province, US troops will help build water and school wings.

US troops will also offer medical assistance in central Mindanao, including Maitum town, where officials search for suspected Muslim guerrillas killed eight people last year, Bedford said. AP

Military sets poll deadline

THE MILITARY WILL defeat the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group before the country goes to the polls in May a senior military commander said Sunday.

"Unburdened by military forces do so now, the Abu Sayyaf will be defeated before the midterm elections," Lt. Gen. Roger en Goltz, commander for western Mindanao, told reporters.

He said the military had more than 10,000 troops on the ground on the island of Jolo and that it was only a "matter of time" before the Abu Sayyaf was defeated.

"Before the elections, we will get the high-value targets," Goltz told reporters.

"We will maintain the momentum ... Our troops are more than enough," Goltz was quoted as saying in the Inquirer website. AFP

Comelec lists common areas for posters

By Jerome Aning

CANDIDATES CANNOT NOW CLAIM IGNORANCE as an excuse when they post campaign materials where they are not allowed to do so.

The Commission on Elections' National Capital Region Office has listed 578 "common poster areas" in the 15 cities and two municipalities that comprise Metro Manila.

The entire areas, both old and new ones, were enumerated in a memorandum submitted to the Comelec en banc on Feb. 15 by Director Rhoderick Heredia. Comelec-NCR officers in charge. The list was published on Friday by the Comelec's education and information department in its blog (http://comelec.wordpress.com).

Candidates may put up their posters on the gates, walls and fences of barangay halls, public markets and government offices. They may also put them up in public plazas, public schools, health centers, tricycle terminals as well as crowded courts and open spaces and vacant lots.

Manila's first congressional district has the most number of common poster areas—120. Parañaque only has three.

On Feb. 14, the commission en banc formally issued a resolution deputizing barangay officials, including tanods (watchmen) to help enforce the rules on campaign materials posting.

Resolution No. 7822 gives barangay officials and tanods the authority to tear down and remove campaign materials posted in public places outside common poster areas, remove campaign materials that do not follow the prescribed sizes, arrest people caught in the act of posting unlawful election propaganda, and make reports on the actions they had taken.

The Comelec has instructed Interior Secretary Rolando Puno to take the necessary steps to enforce the resolution. In addition, Puno was given "the authority to impose proper administrative sanctions, if warranted."

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. earlier warned candidates to strictly follow the rules on posting campaign materials. Under election rules, posters should not exceed two by three feet and should only be put up in designated areas.

CARP excludes livestock farms

THE SUPREME COURT HAS EXCLUDED livestock farms from the coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

In a 29-page decision, the tribunal upheld the decision of the Court of Appeals which exempted a 350-hectare farm in San Narciso, Quezon, owned by respondent Vicente S. Uy from CARP coverage.

The high court ruling penned by Justice Renato J. Cuevas Jr. reinstated the unconstitutionality of Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) administrative Order No. 9 which sought to "regulate livestock farms by excluding them in the coverage of agrarian reform and prescribing exclusive retention limit for their ownership."

The DAR exceeded its authority in issuing the AO as it had "no power to regulate livestock farms which have been exempted by the Constitution from the coverage of agrarian reform," the court said.

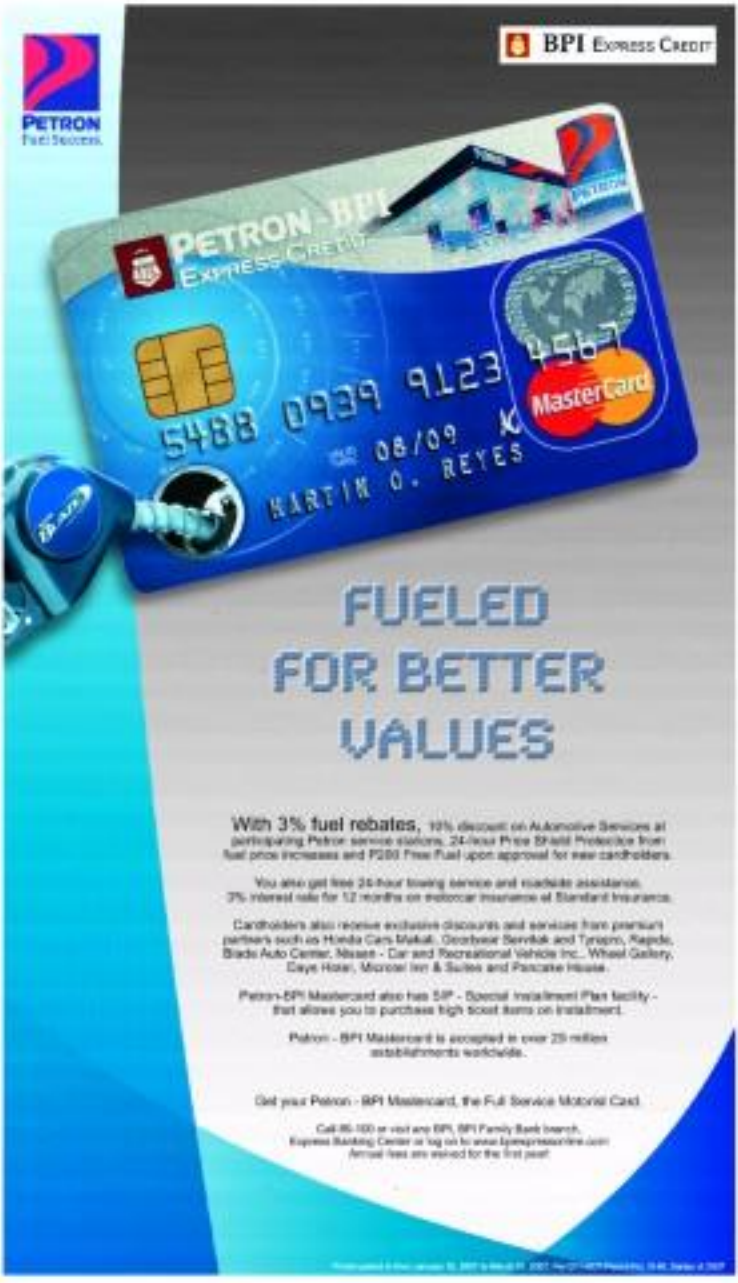
The high court added that a perusal of the deliberations of the 1986 Constitutional Commission confirms the intent to exclude from agrarian reform all lands used exclusively for livestock, swine and poultry-raising which are classified as "industrial" activities.

The case arose when Justice who occupied portion of Uy's property asked the DAR to declare them for owner-beneficiaries.

Uy then filed an application for Exclusion, alleging that the property had been used exclusively for livestock raising for several years prior to the date of effectivity of Republic Act No. 6657 (Rules and Regulations Governing the Exclusion of Agricultural Lands used for Livestock, Poultry and Swine Raising from the coverage of CARP).

The DAR issued an order, which was affirmed by the Office of the President, exempting only a portion of the property. But the CA reversed the decision of the Office of the President and declared that the entire property was exempt from agrarian reform coverage.

(Tero G. Sevilla)



'Mar' backs cheaper drugs bill

IT'S THE LAST chance to bring down drug prices in the Philippines.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II yesterday called on the Board of Investments to act, pronto, in today's special session a Senate-certified measure to bring down the cost of quality medicines.

Roxas, who co-sponsored a similar bill in the Senate, told Sen. Flo Corpuz, chair of the committee on trade and commerce, that the country had come to enacting a law that would drastically lower medicine prices in the face of lobbyist lobbying by major multinational drug firms.

"Please, now is an ideal time to do it because medicines are priced two legs, yes are available in other countries on a much lower cost, one is within reason to ask: why it has taken so long for government to correct this social injustice. But the time is a great deal of political will, and I am hoping that during the five-day session we can demonstrate to our people that such political will does exist," he said.

The President has identified cheaper medicine price bill as urgent but only the Senate version had been passed (with a vote of 20-0 in favor) before Congress adjourned last week. The House bill got bogged down in questions of quorum and opposition from other congressmen.

The House bill proposes to amend the Intellectual Property Code that would allow companies to develop their own generic versions of patented medicines (dubbed as "really working" principle) or the "Bolar provision" by other countries like the US), allowing the private sector to handle parallel importation of drugs, and allow the government to compulsorily license others to manufacture medicines in its immediate exposure to public health demands, as in a by-n-self diversity.

The Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) has maintained that passing the bill would not only weaken intellectual property rights protection, it would open the floodgates to fake drugs entering the country. MTC, Dabo-ongpar Jr.

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For some Chinoys, new year brings little promise

By Alison V. Lopez

AS MOST CHINOYS RECORDED the Year of the Fire Rooster with feasts and fireworks, Norma Estabillores sat on the steps of the muddied mausoleum where she and her son lived.

She was waiting for her "new life" gifts of three inch-ripes so that she and her son could also celebrate the New Year, even in humble way.

Witnessing the Chinese New Year with extravagance may be typical for most Chinese-Filipinos, but for Norma, a 47-year-old caretaker at the Chinese Cemetery in Manila, Manila, it was just another day in the Chinese calendar.

It was almost noon and no one had come last yet. She felt a little down that none of the owners of the mausoleums under her care had thrown up.

Normally, we are waiting for people to at least give us something," she said in Filipino. "When they come, sometimes they give us P1.50. But if they are superstitious, they don't enter."

Estabillos was referring to some Chinoys' belief that it's unlucky to go to the cemetery on New Year's Day. She said she'd had four sons, but two—her sister's favorite—died within months of each other.

"I believe in luck but, of course, fate [work] is also needed," she said.

Another Chinoy who celebrated the Chinese New Year humbly was Juliet Ong, who resides around his Chinatown neighborhood with a cane.

He didn't look ill that old but he already has 11 grandchildren.

Asked how he made his living, Ong mumbled something vague about retirement.

Persevering people

"I really don't do anything. I just stay with my grandchildren," he said, wondering one of them who must frightened by firecrackers exploding nearby.

Half-Chinese Ong had married only but separated from his wife. He was mistaken with gifts but it didn't deter him from working where he was in Tabacos in the 1950s.

He now lives with his eldest son's family in their rented house on Antipolo St.

"The Chinese are persevering," he said. "Even if they have money, they are not ashamed to sell stuff on sidewalks."

Indeed, in many sidewalk stalls and shops, young Chinoy urbanites help man the shops on busy days.

Arguably a modern trait Ong admires about the Chinese.

"Before, they sold used bottles. Now, they are the ones buying used bottles now that even have factories making bottles," he said. "Some used to sell rubs; now they have shops making tubs."

"When it comes to mattress, they are really thrifty," Ong said. He said business magnate Henry Sy started out as a poor man.

But being thrifty is not enough to make one rich, he added.

GONG CHINOYS celebrate the Chinese New Year with feasts and fireworks. Others mark it with prayers, such as members of associations in Chinatown which help out needy Chinoys.

When Chinoys need help, many groups are willing to provide support, he said.

Family ties

He revealed that Chinese-Filipinos have "innovations" that help fellow Chinoys boosting the same consumers.

"If you are a Ming, there is a Ming association. If you are of Lim, a Lee association. If you cannot afford to pay for your schooling, you just go to those associations."

The concept is typically Chinese, who place a strong value on family ties, Ong said.

He said relatives like Lucio Tan, John Gokongwei and Sy donate millions to these associations. In their part, the "poor" ones only give what they can yearly.

Their "associations" hold office in Binondoon in, Ong said.

"But before the Chinese help, they make sure who they will help. If you are lazy, you get nothing. They only give to the truly deserving," he said.

Later in the morning, Ong went to the temple to make an incense offering.

He has a simple wish for the coming year—that none of his grandchildren get sick and that his family, now separated, would be united again.

Aquino, Cayetano can't shake off their namesakes

By Christine Herbosa, Tarra Quismundo and Jeannette I. Andrade

INVESTIGATION MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN: Taguig Rep. Benigno "Benny" Aquino III has asked the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to cancel the certificate of candidacy (COC) of his cousin Theodore, another senatorial aspirant with the same surname.

The only son of the late Benigno Aquino "Ninoy" Aquino and former President Corazon Aquino filed over the weekend a petition to "deny due course and cancel the certificate of candidacy of Theodore M. Aquino," who registered with the Comelec as an independent senatorial candidate.

Theodore, a civil engineer and environment management specialist, is the son of Claudio Aquino, a first cousin of Ninoy Aquino, and a grandson of guerrilla general Francisco Macapagdal. President of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association in America, he said he represents the US-based Global Filipino Coalition.

Nuisance candidates

But Benigno Aquino said allowing Theodore to run for senator in the May 14 elections could cause "serious damage and prejudice" to him considering that they both had the same surname. It would "unnecessarily create confusion among the electorate," he added.

Representative Aquino called Ted "a nuisance candidate who has no bona fide intention to run for public office."

The congressman said that based on the public pronouncements of Ted Aquino, his sole intention for seeking a Senate seat is "to use" Republic Act No. 9225, or the Dual Citizenship Law.

And also "to fulfill a promise to his alleged uncle, Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr.," continued Mitos, taking a jibe at Ted's mentioning his uncle as his inspiration.

'Kuya Ted'

In response to Mitos's petition, Ted Aquino says the Supreme Court ruled, stressing that he was willing to campaign "on the strength of the Kuya Ted name." He said he was willing to give all the "inputs" times to Mitos.

"The name Kuya Ted now embodies the goal of good governance grossly caught after by false pride. Filipinos are yearning for smarter families and friends, and all Filipinos who share the same ideals," he wrote.

Ted Aquino filed his candidacy on Jan. 15, accompanied by former UP president and constitutionalist Jose Abueva. The Global Filipino Coalition is led by leader Vicen Bertos.

Cayetano's votes

Meanwhile, Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday likewise expressed disappointment over the Comelec's en Resolution to cancel the COC of Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada aka "Peter Cayetano" when it worded out its senatorial candidates from the official list of senatorial aspirants.

Cayetano said it was unfortunate that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos closed by the decision of the commission's legal department to let Jinggoy Ejercito continue his senatorial candidacy because he was endorsed by a political party.

Jinggoy Ejercito is part of the senatorial slate of the most powerful Erap (Joseph Ejercito) political clan in Mindanao, Nacionalista Mindanao that is now led by Samar Governor Leonardo Ejercito.

Cayetano has filed his own petition with the Comelec to disqualify Jinggoy Ejercito.

Also in Diario and Newsstand Breakdown

Naia cops doubt solon's story

By Tarra Quismundo

SKEPTICAL SIX-SOMETHING DENIALS, airport security officials are not buying the claim of Lagonoy, Camarines Sur Rep. Imelda Bichara that the bullets and a pistol magazine found in his carry-on bag as he was about to board a US-bound plane Friday night were not his and must have been planted.

Airport security chief Angel Recedes said yesterday that Bichara's evasive of the events—that someone intentionally placed the banned items in his shoulder bag while he wasn't looking—could not have happened given the strict inspection and security monitoring at all airport facilities.

"I'm more sure than [the bullets and magazine] were planted, that's not true because [she] would do that in the airport ... in the three layers of security checks at the airport that could not have passed unnoticed," Recedes said.

Bichara was interrogated as she cried and it had security officials at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Terminal 2 (formerly the north wing) to 9:30 p.m. Friday, while he was about to board Philippine Airlines Flight PR 114 bound for San Francisco. The legislator was taken to the Lt. Police Center for Aviation Security (PCAS) for more questioning.

"What happened just shows that our security system is effective, because he was intercepted. Now, we are checking the X-rays which he passed underwent, and if it's the machines that [are] defect, we will replace the machines. Or if it was the personnel [manning the machines], then we will replace the people," said the official.

But Bichara, who was later released to the custody of a fellow congressman, insisted that the .38 cal. ABO bullets and the empty magazine were not his.

He claimed that the items were likely placed in his hand-carried bag when he left it to go to the toilet while awaiting the call for boarding.

"That's what they say, with the number of people entering the airport, that's not impossible," said Bichara over the phone yesterday.

Senator Hope Ebon Lubiang, [sic Pi-Mi-chief], yesterday said investigators were still looking into the incident, including Bichara's claim that the ammunition was somebody else's.

"That's normal, [don't his allegations, this Iran could they be planted when he was holding his bag at the time the was apprehend-

ed?]" Lubiang said, adding there has[n]ever been an instance at the airport where illegal items were planted in the baggage of a departing passenger.

Bichara had said he was suspected as when police found in his bag as he had passed [t]wo security checks pri-or to the final check, and both X-ray machines detected nothing. He said "it [m]ight be" somebody trying "to sabotage" his political career may have been behind it.

"I'm waiting for the result of the investigation. Of course [I will submit myself]. Nobody's above the law," the legislator told the Inquirer.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, February 19, 2007
7th Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Sir 1:1-10
Gospel: Mark 9:14-29

When Jesus came to the place where they had left the disciples, they saw many people around and some teachers of the law arguing with them. When the people saw Jesus, they were astonished and ran to greet him.

He asked, "What are you arguing about with them?" A man answered him from the crowd, "Master, I brought my son to you for he has a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit seizes him, it throws down and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth and becomes still stiffer. I asked your disciples to drive the spirit out, but they could not."

Jesus replied, "You faithless people. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him.

As soon as the spirit saw Jesus, it shook and convulsed the boy who fell to the ground and began rolling about, foaming at the mouth. Then Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "From childhood. And it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "Why do you say 'If you can?' All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe, but help the little belief I have."

Jesus saw that the crowd was increasing rapidly, so he ordered the evil spirit, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you: Leave this boy and never enter him again." The evil spirit shrieked and convulsed the boy and with a last effort came out. The boy looked like a corpse and people said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him and the boy stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive out the spirit?" And he answered, "This power can drive out this kind, nothing else."

Commentary:

Wisdom is from God and it is the Lord who dreamed it! Wisdom and it is the Lord who created it! Wisdom is the Lord who created it! Wisdom and it is the Lord who created it! Wisdom and it is the Lord who created it! Wisdom and it

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Visa realities

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, WE WOULDN'T NEED TO send our nursing graduates abroad, especially to the United States, to find a job commensurate with their skill and knowledge. While we should all work to make that ideal state of affairs a reality, we should also be ready for—to fact, we should fully come to terms with—the less than ideal conditions that govern the nursing profession in the Philippines.

EDITORIAL One such condition is the profession's current dependence on work in hospitals and clinics abroad, especially in the United States. In the last several years, the wave of registered nurses leaving the country for assignments in foreign shores has turned into a tsunami. Even if the national government were to try to stop the flood, like King Canute it would quickly discover the limit of its considerable powers. The best it can do, in simplified terms, is first to ensure that enough nurses remain in the country to man our own hospitals and clinics; and second, to provide support to the nurses who are hired abroad.

We are happy to note that, unlike many other overseas Filipino workers, the Filipino nurse enjoys the privileges of legally immigrating with her family; social costs are still incurred, but these are mitigated—subsidized, so to speak—by a host country's open-minded immigration policy. We also note, with a quickening sense of hope, that the new policy of medical tourism is already making a difference in the country's best hospitals. This can only lead to better jobs for more nurses here at home.

But there is no denying the outbound orientation that now marks the nursing profession. This is why the directors of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing in the United States to designate Manila as a new site for the administration of licensure examinations is welcome and exciting news.

That is also why the decision by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools to deny the (US) VisaScreen certificate to Filipino nurses who passed the June 2006 board exams is deeply worrying.

On the CGFNS website, the first Frequently Asked Question is answered in this manner: "The passage of the NCLEX or the CGFNS Examination is only one of four general VisaScreen requirements. Under normal circumstances, passage of either examination will fulfill this particular requirement. However, the license of those Philippine Nurses who passed only the June 2006 Exam has been determined to be 'not comparable' to a US nursing license due to the fact that the licensing examination given by the PRC was compromised. Therefore, the VisaScreen certificate cannot be issued, as required by US immigration law and its implementing regulations to those participating in only this compromised examination."

The CGFNS is referring, of course, to the leakage scandal that rocked the June 2006 examinations. An inflexible response from the Arroyo administration helped lead to a protracted legal battle and eventually a Solomonic ruling. With the latest CGFNS announcement, however, a resolve for all nurses who took the June 2006 exams, at least those who wish to work in the United States, seems to be in order.

Unfortunately much of the initial reaction to the CGFNS decision has been spectacularly beside the point. "It's really unfair because the Supreme Court has already arrived at a decision," said Renato Jegillo, president of the Alliance of New Nurses. "The high court has already ruled against the retaking of the exams due to lack of evidence."

Well, yes. But the CGFNS was careful to limit the scope of its own decision. "The CGFNS decision to deny the VisaScreen to the June 2006 passers of the Philippine Nursing Licensure Examination relates only to US immigration law."

In other words, the Supreme Court ruling remains fully applicable to Philippine practice. But it cannot be, it was not meant to be, a substitute for another country's requirements. The best it could have done was assuage CGFNS's concerns about the integrity of the June 2006 exams. Unfortunately, those concerns about a "compromised" test remain.

By all means, the Arroyo administration should act decisively and appeal to the CGFNS to reconsider its decision. But, at the same time, it must already prepare those who want to work in the United States for the probability of a dissatisfactory but necessary retake. It is future sacrifice, and we must swallow it.

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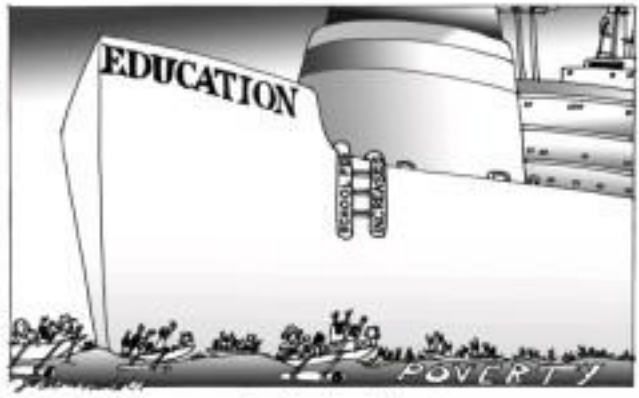


Two more shady deals by Napocor

WILL SHADY GOVERNMENT DEALS NEVER cease? I hardly has an exposed contract deal been investigated than new ones already surface.

The latest to come to light may not come as a surprise since it was forged by the National Transmission Corp., which is notorious for this type of deals. The Hermie Pesayco Infocomy Debates Act (Opinion) is supposed to make Napocor a thing of the past. The law mandates that all of Napocor's assets be sold and that the power industry be privately owned and operated to competition—so that the cost of power will be lower. But Napocor refuses to go quietly. It is still secretly and illegally concluding contracts that would increase power rates for consumers and make us suffocate sick.

Napocor's latest brainchild comes in the form of transferring contracts one with the Luzon Hydro Development Corp. (LHDC), the other with the joint venture of Korean Hydro Power Corp. Philippines (Kepcophil) and Alsons Power Corp.

In document with LHDC, Napocor through its president, Cyrille del Callar, will sell to distribution utilities and other private investors the generated electricity of the power and Agus 7 hydro power plant at P4.33/kWh (the present rate approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission for Mindanao is a little more than P3/kWh) for a 30-year period starting 2011. The Agus 7 project has yet to be built by LHDC in Mindanao and is not expected to be finished until 2011.

By acting as a selling agent of LHDC, Napocor will get a commission of 11 centavos/kWh or P120 million a year, is that allowed by the Epira? Definitely not. The agreement is a violation of power supply contract which the Napocor is prohibited from executing.

What's more, Napocor allowed LHDC to double the power rates without the approval of the ERC. This means consumers with an average consumption of 300 kWh per month will pay an additional P240 per month. The P120-million commission that Napocor will get will also come from the consumers.

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

In the Kephilco-Subcon contract, Napocor assures the farmers of a market for its 200.000-cu.m. feed power plant in Iligan. (Take City for at least 10 years (starting 2011. So sharing all its revenues with the power distribution companies, in other words, Napocor, like in the LHDC deal, will also peddle Kephilco-Subcon's generated electricity to other distribution outfits during the 10-year period.

Napocor has also committed to buy power from Kephilco-Subcon for reserve and backup.

With such agreements, Napocor has blatantly violated the Epira. By offering power supply contracts to distribution firms, Napocor has done away with public bidding which is a requirement for all distribution utilities.

Napocor has also given undue advantage to LHDC and Kephilco-Subcon to the prejudice of other power generation companies. Napocor, by favoring these companies, destroyed the very essence of the Epira, which is to ensure transparency and competitive prices of electricity under a regime of free and fair competition and full public accountability.

Napocor has acted way beyond its power and authority to the rule of power. Sec. 47 of the Epira provides that Napocor may generate power and sell electricity only from the multilateral contracting manual and CSP contracts of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

The power supply contract being offered by Napocor on behalf of the LHDC will be sold at a very high price of P4.33/kWh which is way beyond the ERC-approved rate for Mindanao of only a little more than P2/kWh. This will mean additional burden in electricity consumers in the form of higher power rates, plus commissions to Napocor.

The LHDC tried to justify the high price by saying it is way below the projected price of P5.75/kWh in 2011. But such a contract has to be determined the power and authority of the ERC because all rates are subject to its scrutiny and approval. Napocor and LHDC assume so much by setting a definite average price for a rate that has yet to come several years from now.

The question is: How come legislators, who are members of the powerful Joint Congressional Power Commission, never kept in the dark about the power deals? Napakasimple sila, at a time when Congress was adjourning and all were concerned with the election campaign.

Naturally, the congressmen, especially those from Mindanao, are hopping mad. Lanao del Sur Rep. Benasir Ali Dimaporo said that both Congress and the Office of the Ombudsman should dig deeper into the Napocor-LHDC deal because of charges that Napocor officials who forged the contracts allowed their act of authority and committed acts that violated both the Epira and the power industry of the government.

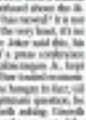
Rep. Edgar Valdez of the Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (Apec) called on Malacañang to reorganize the Napocor because of the "culture of corruption" that appears to be a "take-or-pay contract" with the LHDC. Valdez said the string of alleged irregularities at the Napocor called for a changing of the guards in the power firm, especially amid criticisms that the government's energy officials have failed to implement the Epira in relation to the privatization and regulation of the energy sector.

And Rep. Abdullah Dumapeis of Lanao del Sur is has called for the scrapping of the Lanao Norte power deal because it would have disastrous effects on the lives of his constituents in Lanao del Norte and the residents of Lanao del Sur.

Joke

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



THE ARCHIVES USED TO BE RESPECTED. JOKE doesn't. It's not because he is a Byzantine. I don't particularly like or respect the other Byzantines either, but at least they're not the limelights were the years, except for Raul Daza.

Joker Jose Ibad and supporters in the same way that Tec always liked and respected Nene H. instead. Despite drifting to the "Dark Side" at some point in their lives, they've kept a good deal of the "Force" with them—to the tune of re-finding human rights. That was how they made a name for themselves to begin with, as human rights lawyers. No, more than that, as people whose lives had turned with the libertarian lite.

Insurance, therefore, just puzzled Attorney when I heard Joker last week, defending his decision to join DBMS ranks. It's bad enough that he did join it.

He would have been better off running as an independent and preserved whatever patches of belligerency left clung to the frame of being a maverick. Even if he wins this battle, he will have lost the war: some debate on harmless victories, some victories are crushing defeats. One would imagine that our name to respect here is to commit mistakes in our youth, so we now we will not make any more mistakes in our age, or as our thoughts turn toward beginning a good name to our children. If not to justifying our lives to our Maker. Alas, in this country the opposite happens.

It's bad enough that Joker enlisted in GMA's cause. It's worse that he defended it the way he did.

At the past, he said, he's crossed swords with GMA, particularly when she declared emergency rule, when she supported Cha-cha and when her government got involved in shady deals. But he has had no reason to give up on her. On the contrary, he has had every reason to be bullish about her. "He was one thing that the country is moving forward. The political climate is [also] existing where it is easy to file the country or help it along." The opposition, he said, has nothing to offer. All it has done to try to impeach GMA. While at that, "one has yet to have the opposition denounce attempts by military adventurers to topple the government and set up one outside the Constitution."

How can anyone take his new born a human rights lawyer possibly be confused about the illegality of the "Oakwood mutiny"? It is not forward, it is downward. At the very least, it is an insult irony that a day before Joker said this, his boss had just walked out of a press conference because one reporter, Gil Cabunoc Jr., kept asking him why the offices of his (now) executive growth fund not reached the bumps to date, till didn't just ask a perfectly legitimate question, he asked the only question worth asking. Unless that happens egregiously in only one part of the body to not called pregnant, it is called cancer.

But for more than that, how can anyone who has ever been a human rights lawyer possibly not see the killings? Or, indeed, the murders that is happening right in a Brokaw's own backyard? The disturbs caused by the superscents from the Pacific are nothing compared to the deaths wrought by the evil wind from Malacañang. One has yet to hear the opposition denounce the extra-constitutional plots of adventurous military officers? One has yet to hear Joker denounce the extrajudicial executions by murderous state-sponsored vigilantes. The killings are not just a vicious irony against human rights and civil liberties, they are an abomination against any decent community, never mind democracy.

And still that is nothing. One has yet to hear the opposition denounce attempts by military adventurers to topple government, and set up one outside the Constitution? One has yet to hear Joker denounce the actual act by a presidential aspirant of stealing the vote and setting up a government outside the Constitution. How can anyone, human rights lawyer or not, possibly ignore the "Hello Garci" tapes? The fact that it was illegally obtained may only prevent us from using it to jail GMA. It may not prevent us from using it to hold her as President. The only reason no one, opposition or not, is denouncing any attempt to oust this regime, by using or condoning its unlawful theft of by People Power, is that this regime is a coup regime. One wrongful by ballots rather than by bullets, one wrought by force rather than by guns. It has been defended by guns ever since, and by force ever since to the bitter end.

It was Joker who once brilliantly in those the coup government in the impeachment trial for having betrayed the public trust. Where is the Joker to damn this regime, brilliantly or otherwise, for never having had it in the first place?

If Cory had been "ungrateful" when she knew really fought to bring Marcos down, Ichu would never have happened, and Joker would never have been constitutional attorney. If Joker had been "ungrateful" when he fought her so willy-nilly, drop down, then Ichu II would not have happened, and Joker would never have ended up a GMA minion. Ah, but how soon people forget who they are and what they did.

The real problem with that election is to be a principled alternative or to be a huge joke. The latter brings tears to the eyes, and not from merriment.

University rankings

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

I DIDN'T DO IT! THE SOME SEVEN UNIVERSITIES, and prospective Ateneo parents, were disturbed or discouraged by the announcement that the Ateneo did not rank with flying colors in the research conducted TOEFL-QS World University Rankings. The rankings, as a matter of fact, have been about topic among university personnel in various parts of the world, and many questions have been asked about the methodology used. In an effort to explain the rankings and to answer many questions, Ateneo VP for Research Dr. Leo Garcia-Castro and Mandy Mok, QS regional director for Asia Pacific, met with various Philippine university officials, both jointly and separately. This is what we found.

The ranking of the different universities is based on the Times Higher Education-QuacquarelliSymonds International Commission, Teaching (Quality and Research Quality. What did we find?

First, the good news.—for both students and parents. Among the Philippine universities, the Ateneo ranked highest in Graduate Employability. This was driven from increased activity by head to the employers of graduates in the QS database and media and university referrals. The other criteria are simple inputs of quantitative data that QS was able to gather either directly from the universities, from the website, or from previous year's data.

The highest rank in Recruiter Review means that from the point of view of the world outside, Ateneo graduates are the most sought after in terms of employment.

Not so encouraging are the results of Peer Review, merely 40 percent. But here does Peer Review rate it? The score for Peer Review was determined by the responses of active academics. Each academic was asked to select the 30 best universities in their subject area (Arts and Humanities, Engineering and IT, Life Sciences and Biomedicine, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) in their chosen region (North America, Europe, Asia, etc.). There were equal weights given to the Asia-ranking academics.

The Peer Review, which has the biggest weight, provides some real challenges that must be understood and overcome. One of these is the absence of Ateneo from the ranking in the Arts and Humanities, an area traditionally identified as a strong point of Ateneo. This suggests that Ateneo still have to work to be better known by collegiate abroad. However, there are also questions about the accuracy of the survey. Only about 1 percent of those surveyed returned the questionnaire, yet this accounts for 40 percent of the score.

The Ateneo also ranked low in the area of citations faculty ratio. But there is serious question about the comparability and accuracy of the data used and how they were sourced.

There is many good news, however in the area of International Faculty and International Students, the former ranked highest, thus placing the Ateneo on top in internationalization. But this comes as no surprise considering that Ateneo has been a pioneer in providing students with a global perspective through its Junior Term Abroad in 29 institutions in 11 countries (Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, France, Spain, Germany, Norway and the United States), and through its China and Europe study tours.

Indeed, the rankings pose questions that need further study and introspection. One question that has already been repeatedly raised even by those in top universities is how are totally these rankings should be taken, although they have been used for recruitment purposes and bragging rights. While they provide some measure of comparison, how do they relate to the mission and goals of the university? To what extent should measures be taken to improve the rankings and at what cost?

Clearly, the survey hardly defines into what Ateneo does have the total formation of students. There is nothing in the questionnaire that shows how a university deliberately puts systems in place so that in modern may become nurturing persons, life-long learners and lovers leaders, and that there have been positive outcomes to Ateneo's the graduates. The formation for leadership is a distinct feature of Ateneo the highly-regarded university that it has been for almost 150 years.

In an earlier article of Ateneo president Fr. Bienvenido F. Nebres, S.J., he points out: "Rankings in the Times survey are important because they measure how the world perceives us. But just as a person has to take what people think of them in their stride, so must we take such perceptions as ours, too, have to reflect on these perceptions and measure it within our own view of our vision and mission. Thus, while we will work on strengthening our research and publications in 10 journals ... we need to do this in a way that does not move us away from our own perceptions and our traditional strengths: leadership formation and contribution to national development. There have to continue to be our priorities in a Jesuit university committed to the service of faith and the promotion of justice, and as a university in a Philippines where grinding challenge is overcoming poverty and national development."

Hi. To my colleagues in the law school: Lee did not want to Spain in the current in all. But assure us are are of our place in the Philippine legal firmament; I am sure there is a lot more we can do.

Banned

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

IN THE END, IT WAS THE INTEREST OF THE people—their health and the environment—that prevailed over the interest of big business. In spite strong opposition from banana growers, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte recently signed into law a local ordinance banning the aerial spraying of pesticides in Davao City.

While the ban affects all agricultural entities, it was the Filipino industry, particularly the Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PHILEA) that lobbied hard to prevent the passage of the landmark ordinance. PHILEA even sought help from no less than Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, only to have the latter's plea for the ordinance would be passed. But Yap's grim predictions failed to stop the council and Duterte. After signing the ordinance, Duterte issued quite the significant executive issuances of the city's banana plantations.

Once the ordinance becomes effective—that is, after its publication in a newspaper—plantation owners who engage in aerial spraying of pesticides—they constitute 25 percent of all agricultural entities in the city—will have three months to phase out such practice. The penalties prescribed for a violation of the ordinance include a fine of P5,000 for the first offense, imprisonment of one month to one year, and, for repeat offenders, suspension or perpetual cancellation of city-issued permits and licenses.

Indeed, the anti-aerial spray ordinance is one of the most divisive issues Davao City had to contend with in the past few years. Debates on the issue were the pros and cons were not limited to the members of the city council, the debates also broke out outside official circles.

On one side of the debate were the members of various environmental groups, NGOs, people's organizations, members of the academe and other professional groups. Actually, these were the same groups that united the anti-aerial spray campaign and prodded the city council to take notice of the matter. On the other side were PHILEA members, plantation owners and workers, some barangay officials and government agencies like the Department of Health, Department of Trade and Industry and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The latter actually presented a bleak scenario in the event that the ban would be imposed. The "sky" was also waged in the media, where anti-aerial spray proponents were demonized as anti-development.

In one point. City Councilors Benjie Oreña, the principal author of the ordinance, and Leonardo Avila, the chair of the committee on environment, were once declared persona non grata by a group identified with the banana owners. "In the end, no matter what the counterarguments will be on your political career, you have to take a stand; you have to make a decision choice," said Avila.

Indeed, there were nominations that "going against" the industry (which continues to rank as one of the country's biggest dollar earner) during the election season is a big political handicap. If only it doesn't is an open secret that the "support"—direct or indirect—of the so-called captains of the banana industry has been crucial in the political career of politicians, past and present.

But the "unthinkable" happened. Come say the passage of the ordinance was an exercise of pure populism on the part of Duterte and the members of the city council. Although many others believe that it was their genuine concern for the environment and the health of the people that pushed them to pass the ordinance. "It is not about the money. It is not something to do with window," Duterte said.

Whatever their reasons, the ordinance was a big blow and delivered a strong message to the banana industry, which for decades has dominated many facets of the city's political and economic life.

And, it could just be the beginning. Actually, Davao City is the second, after Bukidnon, to ban the aerial spraying of pesticides. Advocates of the ban should now expand the campaign to other banana-producing areas.

But aerial spraying will persist, though, should not let their guard down. Already, their anti-talks in media circles that the Davao City ordinance will be amended after the elections to water-down the provisions which the banana owners see as stringent. This is probably the reason Duterte's bigs, while he was dismissed at the passage of the ordinance, was quoted as saying that he still expects a "win-win" solution to be made in the future.

But more than banning aerial spraying, probably it is also high time to focus on the other practices that the environment are of chemicals and pesticides. The rampant use of these chemicals by workers, child labor and other environmental and human rights issues bounding the industry mean that for so long have been taken for granted.

* * *

GO OUT AND VOTE. The unofficial election for all chapters of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines are slated this Saturday, Feb. 24. All competent and competent who are qualified to vote—those who are lifetime members and those who have paid their dues until last Jan. 31—are encouraged to participate in this biennial exercise.

* * *

Comments at *bar_luse@yahoo.com* or *bar.luse@hotmail.com*

Revolt in the making

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL AND IMAM, A REvolt has begun. Like all revolts, it started small, but it could end up a truly big deal. The revolt has three objectives: the scrapping of the park barrel; the reorganization of the internal revenue allotment; and the reorganization and the reorganization of the park barrel into the internal revenue allotment.

The revolt seeks to achieve its aims through the enactment of a law to resort to human public opinion, regardless of any opposition that officials may demonstrate in the coming months, even years. Like all revolts, it is centered on a personality—not to take sides, but to ease the drama as recently powered by the officials themselves people's initiative and referendum.

Those who support the revolt envision a law with the following provisions in broad strokes. The law would make it the policy of the State to limit the work of Congress to enacting legislation (and, I presume, to its equally essential work of oversight and investigation). It would prohibit representatives and senators from implementing and following-up projects. The law would provide for a line item budget, and it would punish local officials who violate the law.

The gentleman who told me about this burning revolt is named Luis Manuel A. Flor who lives last December when I was in Bacolod City to speak on behalf of Gloria Arroyo as a forum sponsored by the archdiocese. When I met him again in Bacolod City last month, he told me that the revolt was still there and that he was enabling big names in the local media, and they are trying to engage allies in their cause. His hope is that their proposal will receive national attention—and participation.

It struck me that of the kinds of the proposed anti-corruption advocacies that have gained media currency in the ranks of our political, professional, academic and other classes. The advocacies are more local autonomy, which requires more fiscal independence; a drastic reduction in patronage which has customary effects on official accountability and sound public administration; and a

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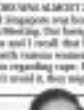
The Singapore story



REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

THE LAST TIME MY WIFE SINGAPORE WAS ALMOST 20 years ago. I was posted in Jakarta, and Singapore was hosting the annual Asean Foreign Ministers Meeting. Our foreign secretary was the late Raul Manglapus and I recall that he had just come out of a confrontation with various women's groups in the country for his communist-regarding views. He was quoted as saying that if women can't vote it, they might as well relax and go some enjoyment. Of course, he was only kidding when he made those remarks but...

This trip was for personal reasons. Penny and I, who

wanted to visit the places we missed when we traveled as part of an official delegation. In the departure lounge of the Ninoy J. Centennial terminal, we had our first brush with the basic reality of Philippine-Singapore relations. A young girl, possibly 20 years old, asked if she could join us at our table. She had a load of noodles which expressed and at first we thought she was a Filipina. She was not, she said so that she was from Cotagan, Davao Sur. Her husband was a security driver, and they had a 7 year-old boy. The husband's income was unstable and they felt it was necessary to try her luck abroad. Somehow she was recruited as a domestic helper for a Singaporean family. Her English was quite limited, but there was a look of determination on her face.

Government press releases refer to overseas Filipino workers as heroes. They sacrifice so much for so little because our government is unable to provide them with better opportunities at home. As the young lady excused herself and went on to join her friend, I prayed that her employers would be decent people who would treat her as a fellow human being. I thought of her little boy and the terrible cost we have to pay in terms of the love of so many Filipino families in similar circumstances.

From the Singapore side, this is how it looks. In her book "Singapore in a Nutshell" (4th edition), Dr. Selma Bandon of Nanyang Technological University notes "that our economy might actually depend upon the Philippines because so many of us depend on our Filipino maids. Filipino maids are those contributing rather directly to the success of the economy because, by managing households, they enable women to take up paid work. Household help came to Singapore when the maid quota boom, grin curbed or implemented. What must the economy."

* * *

On board, The Stamford, is located in front of the Civilian War Memorial, which is dedicated to all those who perished during the Japanese Occupation from 1941 to 1945. Lisa Hall and I got our first culture shock as we looked at the names of those who were rounded up and machine-gunned to death by Japanese troops as punishment for supporting China in the 1937 Sino-Japanese conflict.

The memorial was a reminder that last Thursday, 8th, 15, was the 65th anniversary of the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in World War II. It took 70 days for 60,000 Japanese troops moving on bicycles with very limited food supplies to capture Malaya and Singapore, along with 130,000 British, Indian and Australian soldiers. The Japanese forces were led by Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita who established a reputation as the "Tiger of Malaya." Winston Churchill, the man who built a prime minister, described the fall of Singapore as "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history."

In the first volume of his memoirs "The Singapore Dream," Lee Kuan Yew notes a "miniature memoir" in the Cabinet of his son Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, written about the end of the Japanese Occupation. "The British had left much of their inherent superiority so convincingly that most Asiatics thought it hopeless to challenge them. But now one Asiatic race had dared to defy them and smashed that myth. However, once the Japanese looked over us as conquerors, they soon demonstrated that they were more cruel, more brutal, more unjust and more vicious than the British."

The elder Lee also describes his first close-up view of a Japanese soldier. "About all, what made them look strange were their soft, pointed caps, with cloth flaps at the back hanging over their necks. They were unfamiliar figures, small, squat men wearing coffee with large helmets. They exuded an unreal smile, a small I will never forget. It was the color from the great unwashed after two months of fighting along jungle tracks and route roads from Kota Bharu to Singapore."

On 15 Feb., Feb. 15 was the final nail. It turned out to be the most prominent new year since the Chinese arrived in Singapore in 1819.

* * *

One of the first places a tourist visits on a visit of Singapore is the statue of Sir Stamford, a mythological creature that has the head of a lion and the body of a fish. With so much going on in Singapore, it is easy to forget that a lowly parrot on the desks flooding the Merlion, "Ulysses by the Merlion" by Edwin Thumboo, a two-time winner of the Singapore Book Award for poetry: "this lion of the sea, culturated, salty, wondrous of tail, touched with power" is perhaps an image of the people of Singapore.

* * *

In less than 40 years, the World Bank-applauded Singapore feels is less developed to a developed country. In fact, the second volume of Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs is titled "From Third World to First." The Philippines is exactly the opposite case. In 40 years, we went from the top of Asia's most likely to almost the bottom, just above Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

The Singapore story could never have taken place without the ingredient of discipline, and all the signs of a disciplined population are there. The streets are clean, the drivers are alive, the rules are adhered to (even providing pennies by the city). People obey the simplest of traffic rules. There is no blowing—the fine for this violation is a hefty 1,000 Singapore dollars. Graffiti artists is punishable with six strokes of the cane. And most important, here the law is strictly implemented and enforced. We have many laws, but enforcement is often on a selective basis. At times, there is practically no enforcement.

* * *

Calling all ABS alumni: The Asian Institute of Management and the ABS Alumni Association are sponsoring an Asian Business Conference "ABS for a New Asia: Unfolding Opportunities" from March 1, 2007 at the Shangri-La Hotel to March 2, 2007 at the ABS campus. The conference is conceived as a vehicle for re-launching ABS as the premiere graduate school of management and authority in the Asian region.

Uncouth, boorish foreigners

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT tourism Secretary Joe Lozano must be very pleased with his tourism data. He numbers are up! The bad news is that half of those numbers are because the, they're not tourists but temporary residents.

The good news is that they are studying English on their way to the United States. The bad news is that they are causing quite a bit of disruption in the Bosnian villages they are forming. Just ask the locals in the mountainous who go to Laguna. You'll have your ears shorped off for at least two hours hearing about the things these Koreans do or don't do.

They rent apartment units or houses in some of the more posh villages and then bully their way around. When they rent the units, they claim they are a family of five. Then the number grows and you notice children, more or less of the same age, occupying the same unit. Before you know it, the unit has been turned into a dorm.

In one of the hotels I paid considerable money, (5 children were found in one unit. They are rough and they are loud! and there is no other name to call them but boorish, uncouth, foolish, rude! I do hope Korean Embassy officials are reading this, so that they can try their invaders than the natives are getting restless.

The problem is all over greater Manila, Tagaytay and Cebu. They have heard how inexpensive it is to live in our country, and in a very well-mannered language, have invaded our land. Check with the residents of Bel Air, the condominiums in Ortigas, Greenhills and the Valle Verdes. The problem is, as a people, we are too accommodating and it's our claim how to make the visitors feel at home. That's why they take advantage of us.

Check with those who play golf! Be prepared to spend at least 20 minutes to beat the tourist + friend will take off.

I suggest to the Korean ambassador that he do something about this because I don't want to going into any racial riots. But, like our National Hero Jose Rizal said, the Filipino is like the carabao, placid, complacent until he goes amok. I trust we don't get to that.

Secretary Lozano could perhaps come up with a "How to live in the Philippines 101" for these Koreans. (Lest this readers get the wrong impression, there are many very good Koreans who have been living in this country for some time.)

Now, the Koreans should be here properly and we Filipinos should not allow ourselves to be bullied in our own country.

—HAGIDEO S. DORAIZEL
1103 Taft Ave., Manila

Let's vote with our minds, not with our hearts

THIS IS IN REACTION TO Diosdado Cruz's column titled "Dan Ji married . . . Senator," (December, 2/11/07).

It saddens me to note that opposite like Justice Cruz, whose mind as the Supreme Court should have left him with no space mind, has such a myopic view of what makes for qualified senators.

Listing a numerical acronym or being an actor should not be the only measure of a eminently qualified's qualifications. The basic question should still be: Is the candidate capable of doing legislative work or not? If he is, then by all means let us vote for him, if not, then let us not vote for him.

I beg to disagree with Justice Cruz that the only legitimate candidates are Loren Legarda, Francis Escudero, Juan Ponce Enrile, Manny Villar, Panfilo Lacson, Joseph Estrada and Senator Roxas. Magdalena has a lot to explain to the people because he was the one who allowed the nation to be elevated in the last presidential elections. What qualifications does Bong Revilla have except that he is also riding on the name of his late husband? So, what makes these candidates better than the rest?

The only right way to elect anyone is to vote wisely. We should let our minds, rather than our emotions, rule. We should think of our future rather than little coily of the present. We should keep in mind that the result of a senator entails mutual emotions. Therefore, we should vote for candidates not because they are popular but simply because they are qualified to be senators of our country.

—JANICE PUNO,
Al Aberdeen St.,
Project 8, Quezon City

Erratum

Saturday's editorial, "Dumb words," incorrectly stated that Juan Ponce Enrile voted to retain the 10 loans in 1991. What the editorial should have referred to was Enrile's vote in favor of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States in 1999. Our apologies.—Ed.

Guarding the guardians

A FEW MINUTES BEFORE WE had our dinner last Feb. 4, a friend allowed my kids to watch a little TV. They decided to watch a children's show. Mindful as ever, I searched the show easy my kids' heads. I know local TV to be extremely insensitive to children, but what I saw a few minutes later stunned me. In a musical number, boys and girls (at about less than 10 years of age) took turns singing the lines of a popular old song. The lines went:

Filipyo tayuan, Mayang tai
Pahawak-tawnan, Bawag-no!
Dino-bito, mawawagi!

As these lines were sung, the children danced "appropriately" to the chorus and beat of the song. Just imagine.

I know this is not at all surprising to most readers and some will actually wonder what could be wrong with the picture. Those who understand what the organizers chose complete disregard of propriety and decency may be wondering how this could happen in a TV network that boasts of an NGO that promotes child protection.

Should it be the fault of the way the producers of the show of letting their sons out of innocence when they asked the kids to perform such a number? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Would it be too much to accuse the top managers of the TV station of gross irresponsibility when they allow such segments in shows that are promoted as child-oriented programs? Perhaps, and perhaps not.

Who will protect children from TV stations like these?

—VICTOR A. VILLADIVIA,
professor of reading education,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

Don't compare Davide with Bolton

I HAD PUBLISHED WITH A COPY of Ramon Nemesio Mo. '32 reunion in the Inquirer.

To be clear, I am not one of those officials wanting to stay on instead of peacefully leaving out from the service." I was assigned as permanent representative of the Philippines to the United Nations, a senior civil service rank at age 45 vs. do as a job. My peers have acknowledged that I have served my country well, and Filipinos, especially those in the UN, are proud to cite my achievements. I have fulfilled my mandate.

I understand the feelings of Filipinos in the UN who "mourned Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo of committing a faux pas" when he informed UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that retired Justice Hilario Davide would be the new Philippine representative to the UN and when he handed the secretary general an envelope on Davide. They considered it unnecessary and insulted his leadership of the envelope for Davide which goes against the culture of the organization they work for. They say it has to do with protocol, good taste and a sense of delicadeza. Incidentally, I advised Romulo against doing it, but I suppose my lead his own reasons for doing so.

It does not help to compare Davide's situation with that of former US Ambassador John Bolton. The latter came to New York as a "recess" appointee, and it was all the way to the UN. Certainly, we do not wish that baggage on the retired chief justice and, certainly, our country does not intend to do a Philippine John Bolton to the UN.

—LAUREL BASA III,
Philippine representative
to the United Nations

RP should say no to US war vs Iran

WE FILIPINOS, INCLUDING OUR government, should appeal to US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair not to launch a war against Iran because it would set off a regional holocaust that would also hurt the Filipinos, who are just innocents by-standers. Such a war would be a total prize to anyone without insight and rich than only the very rich could afford to buy gas.

Moreover, the fate of thousands of Filipinos who work in the Middle East would be placed in danger, while their remittances to their families at home would stop. This would mean greater hunger and suffering for our people.

Bush and Blair claim that Iran is building a capacity to build a nuclear bomb. Granted this is true, Iran cannot say that they are merely building a capacity to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. The United Nations Organization has yet to see evidence of nuclear bomb manufacture in Iran. Where are the weapons of mass destruction that who-says-anything-right after they declared that Iraq under Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction?

After there he was captured, they declared that he was hiding. Now they say that they are introducing democracy to Iraq. What we see in Iraq is not democracy but puppetry by a few, a popular insurgency and a brewing civil war that have killed tens of thousands of Iraqis.

As I am writing this survey, the majority of Filipinos are still the biggest admirers of Bush and Blair despite their being hated by the rest of the world, maybe Bush and Blair would listen to them, do the right thing and say, "Enough already, stop, salve no territory, mission accomplished."

—RAMUEL S. ARABIO,
whalmar@yahoo.com

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CEBU PACIFIC

System loss charges, VAT prescribed by law

THIS IS IN REPLY TO THE LETTER OF LIBBY Wilson titled, "Taxing consumers for pilfered power." (Inquirer, 2/8/07)

He said that by not having the utilities to file charges against those stealing electricity, the Energy Regulatory Commission makes it possible for the utilities to avoid additional expenses and, therefore, earn more profits. Please allow me to clarify.

I cannot speak in behalf of the other distribution utilities. But, I would like to assure Wilson that we, in Meralco, are waging a very aggressive campaign against power pilferage. In fact, we have signed several memoranda of agreement with local government units specifically to address the problem of electricity theft and illegal connections. A significant number of our workforce have been dedicated to the task of going after power pilferers—meaning, we, in fact, allocate a substantial amount of resources for the purpose.

Wilson also raised the issue of why legitimate consumers are charged by pilfered electricity. The collection of "system loss charge," which is common sensical, was provided for by Republic Act 7832—to allow private distribution utilities to recover the cost of power lost due to both technical and non-technical causes. Pilfered electricity falls under the category of non-technical losses. The law, however, at least private distribution utilities to recover from the customers up to 9.5 percent of the amount of system losses. All losses beyond this 9.5-percent cap set by the law, the utilities have to absorb. Hence, contrary to the other hand, we allowed a cap of up to 14 percent.

Lastly, Wilson asked why consumers are that get the value added tax for the system loss charge. The law, as explicitly stated in RA 9337 or the Reformed VAT Law (RVAT), imposes a value-added tax on the sale of electricity and related services by generation companies and distribution companies. The 9.5 percent system loss is part of electricity sold. It is our duty, as a responsible corporate citizen, to abide by what the law prescribes.

We hope this letter clarifies the matters Wilson raised in his letter—in the spirit of transparency and fair play.

—ELPIDIO CENA,
vice president and director,
Corporate Communications,
Meralco, 11/F Lopez Building,
Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City

No response from QC mayor and barangay chair

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE INQUIRER for publishing my letter about "Salvage Street" last Jan. 5, 2007. Just to let you know, since then, the Barangay Marunuchan and the Quezon City mayor's office have done exactly nothing locally.

Further, the brazen delivery guy, who used to bring my paper before 6 a.m., gave up on my route. It was he who discovered those latest corpses, and now he is too nice-fled to even go by Salvage Street. I was passed on to another delivery boy who, despite repeated complaints, saves bringe the paper before 7:30 a.m. More often than not, the boy just gets here toward noon, when all of us in the family are either at work or in school.

So at the end of the day, we come home to a stale newspaper all because even the newsboys are too scared of the ghosts (heroes and nonheroes) that haunt Salvage Street.

—RA. CARMEN AQUINO SARMIENTO

'All politics' quote from O'Neill, not Gingrich

IN HER JAN. 2 COLUMN, MELINDA QUINtos-Cerano attributed the quote "All politics is local" to former US House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Actually, the quote came from former Speaker Thomas Philip "Tip" O'Neill Jr. who served as Speaker for 10 years, the second-longest serving Speaker in US history. He served in the US House of Representatives for 34 years, representing two congressional districts of Massachusetts.

—JESSE UMBOGAN,
jsabanacan1@verizon.net

Penalties for violation of senior citizens' rights

IN RESPONSE TO THE LETTER OF CARLOS Manalastas Francisco, 1/24/07) I would like to assure him there is no law banning senior citizens from using credit cards for the purchase of medicines and other items covered by the public acts 7432 and 9257. However, drug stores and many supermarkets have rejected it by refusal to honor the senior citizens' 20-percent discount privilege, claiming that this runs up whatever income they expect to realize from such sales.

But the law, RA 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003 now provides the penalties for those who will violate any of its provisions.

Sec. 16 of the law states:

"Any person who violates any provision of this Act shall suffer the following penalties:

"1. For the first violation, a fine of not less than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000) but not exceeding One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000) and imprisonment of not less than six (6) months but not more than two (2) years.

"2. For any subsequent violation, a fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000) but not exceeding Two hundred thousand pesos (P200,000) and imprisonment of not less than two (2) years but not more than six (6) years.

"If the offender is a corporation, organization or any similar entity, the official thereof directly involved shall be liable therefor. . . .

"Upon filing an appropriate complaint and after due notice and hearing, the proper authorities may also cause the cancellation or revocation of the business permit, permit to operate, franchise and other similar privileges granted to any business entity that fails to abide by the provisions of this Act."

—EDMUNDO S. REYES,
lawyer, 19 Darby St.,
White Plains, Quezon City

Across the NATION

Soldiers' votes seen to ease out Left

By Tarra Quismundo
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE MILITARY IS planning to use the votes of soldiers to ease out militant party-list representatives and their leaders in the barangays through the local elections in May and barangay elections in October, a leader of the party-list group Anakpawis said.

Nilly Machelle, an Anakpawis nominee, in this year's elections, said the details of that plan were outlined in the document "Specific Operational Guidance for Armed Forces Counter-party-list at the barangay council."

The document, advised "Unwrapping a better community leadership to address the grassroots' problems" at the barangay level and "AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) outreach to political machine arena," was written by a certain Lt. Col. Yagong and began as he implemented in 2006, according to Machelle.

The document held the view that "local communist movement leaders and party list representatives ... will multiply their efforts to get as much votes and seats from the barangay to Congress."

The filming Highlobolot ng Hipon, to which Machelle seeks as deputy secretary general, equated obtaining the documents from a military official who is "a front identity."

Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino said the document is "merely a threat paper" by flagging it a general staff course.

"It is not an official paper of the AFP," Tolentino told the Inquirer in a telephone interview on Sunday.

He said it has not been adopted as a program of the Army.

Tolentino also said the paper's author was not assigned in any infantry battalion.

"(Yagong) is with the Scout Rangers, and is not involved in SOT work," he said.

Asked about soldiers being primed as a voting bloc against party-list groups, Tolentino said: "We don't force soldiers to vote for or against any candidate. But we do explain to them that we regard the New People's Army as an enemy and as clear groups that are allies of the NPA are also our enemies. Soldiers should think well who to vote for."

Machelle believed the document is authentic and reflected the official actions of the AFP in recent months to counteract the SOT issues had been deployed.

The document, he said, confirmed that the "AFP is interested to partisan politics and is highly active in sabotaging our organizing work and our party-list groups."

The paper also explained why soldiers' have reportedly registered greater than their elections.

"In effect they became flying voters," Machelle said in a statement.

A copy of the document given to the Inquirer gave the instruction to soldiers: "A company of soldiers having a detachment in a community [influenced] barangay councilors in the locality as residents by buying their residence certificates (legislative barangay residence tax) in the municipal halls a year prior to election day and register with the local Comelec (Commission on Elections) as voters in the barangay where their detachment is located."

Anticipating doubts, it provided an advice. "When questioned that they do not have properties in the area, the ready argument is, 'Rents din kami sa bahay ng mga tao sa loob ng 20 taon.' I search sure the soldiers who live in said detachment the two to five years?" the document said.

If the soldiers qualified as barangay residents, it said "the 70 to 100 soldiers can now help some into office (the CAFs [Calyle Active Installation] is 40% voters) or affect how the barangay council by 1000 and national election."

The residency status is a basis for soldiers to plan out the campaign, the document said.

According to the document, this has to be done because "In the AFP, there is a growing concern about the growing party-list influence in the barangays as they supplant the 20% land barangays year in and year out."

The second approach is to train and field CAAs and AFP retirees as candidates in the barangay elections, the document said.

4 party-list leaders file complaint vs Army, rebel group

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—LEADERS OF four party-list groups here filed on Tuesday a complaint against the Philippine Army and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade before the Commission on Elections in Negros Occidental for alleged harassment of their leaders and members in Negros Occidental.

Rainir Mesa Negros Occidental chair Alejandro Teruel, Anakpawis Negros Occidental coordinator Alex Edmund, Gabriela Silaynoni Barry vice president for the Visayas Nicolas Ceniza-Jose and Kabataan Party Philippines Negros Occidental secretary general Ismael Sumaoang signed the complaint.

In their complaint, the party-list leaders said soldiers have allegedly harassed their members before the campaign period started and they feared the harassments would intensify in the coming days.

They alleged that Army personnel belonging to the 61st Infantry Battalion have conducted house-to-house campaign in Barangay Orong and Hilamonan in Kabankalan City, in Himamaylan City and, lately, in Binalbagan town urging residents to withdraw their membership from the party-list groups.

The soldiers also asked the residents to refrain from voting for the party-list groups, the party-list leaders alleged.

They claimed that a certain "Sergeant Alap" of the 61st IB has warned peasant organizer Achilles Verano, a residents of Barangay Orong, Kabankalan City, on Jan. 26. The soldier allegedly warned Verano, a National Federation of Sugarcane Workers organizer, to stop his involvement in progressive organizations, they added.

"We don't want to refer red-baiting tactics designed to malign our organization but it happens again," the complainants said.

They recalled that in 2004, their partner were painted with words "do not vote for communist-front."

"We were accused of being 'terrorists' and 'bomb-throwers,' which put the lives of our members in grave danger," they said.

The military denied the allegations. "I have not witnessed allegations," said 61st IB commander Col. Norman Flores.

The complainants said they also opposed the proposal to consign the 109-ARB from the Camalig purchase.

The members of 109-ARB, a breakaway group of the Communist Party of the Philippines, have People's Security arms given pursuant to the peace agreement signed in 2001.

The party-list leaders said it would be dangerous to allow the 109-ARB to carry firearms during the election period because of the 2004 experience, when successive complaints were lodged against its members for gun-ban violations.

Comelec Negros Occidental representative Jessie Suarez said the groups should back their complaints with affidavits and file them before the police or prosecutor's office.

Roundup

40-day feeding for Bicol kids

SORSOGON CITY—For 40 days starting Feb. 2, Grades 1 to 6 pupils in Bicol will be fed with milk, noodles, chocolate drinks, and bean curd soup. The Department of Education launched this nutritional rehabilitation program to supplement the nutritional needs of about 68,000 schoolchildren in the region. Education Secretary Jesli Lapus, Gov. Salvador Escudero and Rep. Sally Lee Ty, Bicol regional health supervisor, said the program will test the vitamin drop. **Bobby Lalabo, Inquirer Southern Luzon**

Books, school supplies for S. Luzon

PRECIOSO, Batangas—Education Undersecretary Alfred Labrador distributed textbooks and school supplies to more public school students on Feb. 1 under a recently launched program dubbed "Isday ang Pag-asa ng mga Bata (The Children's Wisdom Continues)." At least 830,000 students in Southern Luzon, who are affected by the recent calamities, will be benefited. Labrador said the government was accepting donations for the program. **Rodrigo Labrador, Inquirer Southern Luzon**

Mayor sworn into office

LEGAZPI CITY—Mayor Fernando Modico of Camalig, Albay was finally proclaimed and sworn into office as the chief executive of the romantic province's town. Judge Noche Gomez administered the oath of office for Modico, a year-long procedure, after he was proclaimed by the Commission on Elections on Jan. 30. Modico garnered 13,867 votes to win the mayoral race, while Rosalie Mayo won as vice mayor with 12,372 votes. **Inquirer Southern Luzon**

Avian flu watch at Mindoro lake

CITY OF CALAPAN—The provincial task force on avian flu has been monitoring Naujan Lake for bird flu with the onset of the bird migration season expected to arrive in October. Dr. Ruth Iris Lim, provincial coordinator for the avian flu control task force, said they are conducting regular sampling of blood and swabs samples along the banks of Naujan Lake. The samples are then brought for analysis to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Lipa City. Five watchtowers are also being constructed along the lake—in Pola, Victoria, Naujan and Veloz. **Madonna Virola, Inquirer Southern Luzon**

Cops to stop stolen-car trading

ANGELES CITY—The police's traffic management group in Central Luzon launched "Operation Depanel Now" to stop the trading of stolen vehicles in the region. PSSupt. Reginaldo Victor Tuad, Region's Gutierrez said they have asked car owners and carjacking victims' awareness from the TRAC and the local police stations they could sell vehicles. Gutierrez said police would go after syndicate members who steal cars and luxury vehicles in Metro Manila and sell them to Central Luzon dealers and buyers who are targeting from registration papers. **Joe Ubaldo, Inquirer Central Luzon**

Cops nab suspected leader of armed group

LIMAY (3 PM), Pampanga—Police arrested the suspected leader and three members of a private armed group in San Simon town on Saturday. Chief Insp. Rodolfo Noel Caligagan, provincial director of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit, arrested Leonilo Dato, 56, suspected leader of the Dato Group, and his brother, Eb. Christopher Catabay, 30, and Leonard Cuevas, 25, after a chase. Dato faces a pending warrant issued by Judge Elmo Pido of the Angeles City regional trial court. Seized from the group were two .45-cal. pistols, a .38-cal. revolver and bullets. **Joe Ubaldo, Inquirer Central Luzon**

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Pampanga groups share survival stories with Bicolanos

LEGAZPI CITY—IT WAS A JOURNEY MEDIUM just to deliver truckloads of relief goods to Albay from eating comfort and spend goodwill.

The Catholic caravan to Bicol, a three-day solidarity mission organized by the church-based Social Action Center of Pampanga (Sacerp), was composed of parish workers and priests, local government executives, including disaster officers and village chiefs, and representatives of relief and development assistance groups.

In a forum held Feb. 16 at SM Legazpi, the highlight of their mission, they shared their experiences of the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption in Albayanons swelling from Mt. Mayon's disasters in 2006.

Typhoons Milenyo and Reming that hit the country late last year left hundreds dead and missing and devastated the homes and livelihood of thousands in Southern Luzon.

Magdalena Abrahan of Manila town woman-at-bats the house that she built from savings after typhoon as an overseas worker was wiped out by Luzon storm in 1991.

She narrated how she found the courage to rebuild her life after joining a women's organization that helped in the sandbagging of the dikes and in cleaning the river.

"I used to be timid but this changed when I joined the group and learned that we could also stand on our own when the landfill are not around," she said.

Nay Limpin, a former member of a cooperative, said he found enough being part of an association.

With support from the group he was able to transfer to an unrewarded land when labar buried a recyclable plot he was tending in a temporary shelter.

Susan Pasquerella Jr., disaster action officer of Caritas, a group that experienced the ravages of typhoons, earthquake, flashfloods such as typhoon Ilona, emphasized how land-based mitigation projects and community participation could effectively reduce economic losses after Pinatubo.

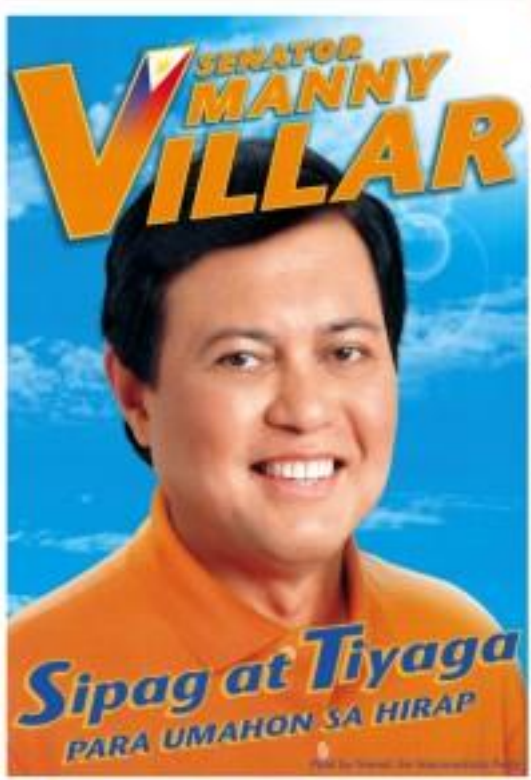
"Don't lose hope and never give up," was their encouragement to the people in their forum, who came from various parish centers in the mudflow hit villages of Legazpi City, Daraga, Camalig and Guinobatan.

Fr. Jose E.U. Zalsos, Sacerp executive director said the caravan brought along three truckloads of rice, food, blanket, new clothes and boxes of medicines donated by parishes, local governments, civil society and business groups.

About 35.5 million worth of checks granted from a telethon project of the local government of San Fernando and from various sectors was turned over in Tabaduan Pass Mayor, a program of SAC Legazpi, he said.

Vilma Bonifacio, Inquirer Southern Luzon

REMEMBRANCE GUINAUCON
Cousins Dorothea Bolabona and Bonnie Paguro offer flowers for their grandfather who perished in the 2006 mudslide in Guinsaugon, during it's first anniversary this Saturday.



10 nabbed for illegal posting of campaign materials

By Carla P. Gomez and Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

IMUGLOD CITY—IMUGLOD COMMISSION ON Elections Registrar Abel Majaducon on Friday said she would report to the Comelec head office in Manila the posting of the campaign materials of unwanted candidates outside the common poster areas.

On Feb. 12, the police arrested 10 persons for allegedly posting Lacson's campaign materials on several establishments and structures along Arimota Street, Bacolod City.

The police filed charges for violations of the Omnibus Election Code and ban Election ban against the 10 before the Bacolod City Prosecutor's Office on Wednesday, but they have been released on bail, Majaducon said.

Majaducon said there are about 30 designated common poster areas in Bacolod City, including the Bacolod Public Plaza.

But she said that under Comelec Resolution 7787, parties could put up common poster areas in every barangay with 3,000 registered voters upon application and approval.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos on Wednesday urged police and village officials to prevent the illegal posting of campaign materials outside the Comelec-identified common parties areas or face penalties.

Abalos warned that the police and barangay officials who allow posters outside the designated areas would face administrative charges for dereliction of duty.

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon and provincial police director Senior Supt. Rosendo Francia joined the Comelec call.

The cost of campaign materials would be cheaper for all candidates if they only followed the rules, Marañon said.

He also said that those hired to post the campaign materials should abide by the law because it is they and not those who hire them, who will end up in jail.

In Cebu City, Senator Presidente Manny Villar was the first senatorial candidate whose posters and streamers were seen in different parts of the city after midnight of Monday last week, the deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy for national candidates and the official start of the campaign.

But enforcement and election officials were not happy as they vowed to go after the people behind in the placing of campaign materials for violating the election laws.

Comelec Cebu City north district election officer Marchel Jaeno said Comelec, the police and the local government will form a task force to go after those people behind in the campaign materials outside the designated common poster areas.

Jaeno said the poll office in Cebu City had designated Plaza Independencia, Parque Osmeña, as well as barangay halls, sports complex in Tabunok and Council of the Elderly Barangays as common poster areas.

Although Villar's posters were being displayed inside Plaza Independencia, similar posters with slogan "Sipag at Tiyaga" were also seen pasted along the major streets of Cebu City.

In M. J. Cuenco Avenue, his posters were seen in electric posts, while a few posters of Senator Edgardo Angara's "Ang Sara ng Bukas" were also seen.

Jaeno, however, said it would be difficult to go after the specific candidates because they could always claim that their rivals did the illegal posting of posters.

The Comelec, police and the local government would instead go after the people caught posting the campaign materials, particularly during night time.

He said the task force would also remove the campaign posters placed outside the common areas.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources 7's OIC chief of the Forest Resources Development Section Roland Abella also warned candidates and their supporters against nailing their posters on trees.

He noted that most of Villar's posters placed inside Plaza Independencia were nailed at the trunks of acacia trees.

Abella said those caught doing this could be charged by violation of Presidential Decree 953, which is the destruction of trees in parks and national highways.

Abella said they would also deploy personnel to go after those people who nail the campaign posters in trees.

Guimaras folk struggling to normalize lives

By Marnie R Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

SUBA PALIWUA, GUIMARAS—The large tents are gone and the place is clear of the cramped makeshift quarters set up six months ago.

The residents of Barangay Tando closely exploring their lives and homes after the massive oil spill that hit their shores last year.

Tando was among the villages badly contaminated by the oil dumped where the MT Solar 1 sank around 17 miles southwest of Guimaras Island on Aug. 11, 2006 spilling about 300,000 liters of bunker fuel on the water and coastline.

At the height of the contamination, the government evacuated about 600 residents for health reasons. The fishermen had to stop fishing and resorted to the cleanup of the contaminated shores to earn money which was barely enough to feed their families. They depended on the food donations to survive.

Now, the villagers are trying to make their lives normal again.

Rosemarie Gandawila, 38, said he resumed to fishing in January after receiving P1,2,000 from the Inbound Fund Oil Pollution Compensation Fund for economic damages resulting from the oil spill.

He spent P6,000 to buy a 3.5-horsepower motor for his boat while he used some of the money to buy fishing nets and other gear.

Gandawila said he gets about five kilos of fish daily, which he sells at P50 to P60 per kilo.

"There are times when I am lucky I get from 10 to 15 kilos, but mostly, the catch is low and we need to go farther into the sea," he said.

Boost

The residents' efforts to get back on their feet received a boost on Thursday after the Canada Fund for local Initiatives inaugurated a livelihood and rehabilitation project to help residents cope with the long-term effects of the oil spill.

The Canadian government provided funds after the Filipino-Canadian community in Canada asked their government to extend assistance to the oil spill victims.

The project involved the donation of four motorized boats, fishnets and other gear for deep-sea fishing to four clusters of fishermen. In turn, the fishermen from the four clusters would divide the income from three catch.

"We wanted a project that would result to a minimum displacement for the residents. So, we decided that our intervention would be concentrated on fishing," said Myrna Arellas, senior program officer of the Canadian International Development Agency.

Arellas said the results of consultations by non-government groups implementing the project showed that residents preferred fishing.

"Third's what they've been doing all their lives," Arellas said.

The project also includes the determination of 140 goats to the residents for breeding. The residents would also receive training in disaster management, gender awareness and management orientations.

Gandawila said they were excited because if won the first to be implemented from the many promises that they heard.

Naren Valencia Mayor Glendale Gonzaga said the supply has brought opportunities for the people. At least 227 groups have discovered rare, unusual goods, needles, clothes and cash for the victims.

However, Gonzaga said they were concerned that much of the 2.1 million liters of the bunker fuel of crew still inside the wreck of the tanker will surface before the year.

"We can never be at peace as long as the threat of another massive oil spill is still there," said Gonzaga.

But the residents are hopeful that the tragedy would fade away after the scheduled removal of the remaining oil from the sunken tanker next month.

FESTO
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They're supposed to be our protectors, says victim's wife

Front page A1

minister that claimed the area has much to lend him the situation in Cagayan Valley. The minister in Cabinet appointee-director of Bayani Mesa, Kasapatan, a church-based organization in Cagayan and other nongovernment organizations.

The 51-year-old Dipolito recounted the terror he saw the night of Dec. 13, 2006, turned into a nightmare.

"Tay (Dolores's nickname), *umay kami nan* (may we come in)," the unexpected caller said thrice.

Dolores was born his bed but was stopped by his wife. "It is Lieutenant Pascua," Nelson whispered.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"It is his voice," he replied.

Asucena walked to the door while his father lit a gas lamp. Dipolito followed his son. Before Nelson opened the door, Dipolito pulled his son's back and asked who was calling him. "It is I, lieutenant Pascua," Nelson repeated.

The new suspicion reminded the house to meet with the victims. Nelson was wearing a camouflage uniform. He was with five **hooded men in black carrying** long firearms.

'They are protectors'

"Bring that lamp back. I don't want to be in the light," Pascua told Dipolito in Ilocano.

"Cook for us," Pascua ordered. Dipolito said his wife Carolina began to prepare coffee. Pascua thronged his mind and said he just wanted a cup of coffee.

Dipolito brought the glasses and a pitcher of water to the men outside, while Nelson stayed inside the house. Dipolito never removed the suspicion that visited the men but much to look into

The Institute of Internal Auditors Philippines (IIAP)

FILIPINOS REACHING THE TOP GLOBALLY

TOP 5 & TOP 25 GLOBAL CIAs

Global Top 5

Pano — Obinyan — Macrocosmos — Mirafuentes

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE AWARDEES

Global Top 25

Atolova — Rafael — Lim

CERTIFICATE OF HONOR AWARDEES

The Philippines has once again competed proudly in the global arena of professional certifications.

In the global qualifying exam held last November 2006, more than thirty-one thousand (31,000) candidates sat for the examinations for the "Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)", the first "Certification in Control Self Assessment (CCSA)", and for the "Certified Financial Services Auditor (CFSA)", which were conducted simultaneously in various exam sites worldwide. From this batch of 31,000 there were approximately four thousand candidates who successfully passed. Among them are Filipino candidates who proudly emerged to be among the Global Topnotchers. It is not by mere chance that among the November 2006 global Top 5 CIAs & Excellence Awards, four (4) of them are Filipinos, and among the global Top 25 CIAs & Honor Awardees, three (3) of them are also Filipinos.

Here are the most recent piece details about the Philippine candidates of November 2006. We are the names of seven (7) individuals who were qualified by IIA Inc. International Board of Regents to be the recipient of the prestigious William E. Smith Excellence Awards and Honor Awards, owing to their outstanding performances vis-à-vis the thousands of candidates who sat for the CIA exams worldwide. Thus, Nov. 2006 William Smith awardees are:

- **Excellence Awards:** This means that in addition to successfully completing the CIA exam in one sitting, the individual has also submitted one of the 5 best exam papers following the Gold Medalist.
  1. Chris Ni. Pano (PNDC – EDC)
  2. Sarah Cecilia S. Obinyan (SGV & Co.)
  3. Ferdinand Mark B. Macrocosmos (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas)
  4. Pol D. Mirafuentes (PNDC – EDC)
- **Honor Awards:** This means that in addition to successfully completing the CIA exam in one sitting, the individual has also submitted one of the 20 best exam papers following those of the Gold Medalist and the first Excellence of Excellence recipients.
  1. Henry D. Aldaco V (Pamplonayan & Asociates)
  2. Mark Lyod Basarte Rafael (Pamplonayan & Asociates)
  3. Vivian Marie Pia Lim (SGV & Co.)

These individuals will be initially acknowledged during IIA-P's first General Membership Meeting on February 16, 2007, 6:00 PM at the Hotel Interport-Makati with the Honorable Senate President Manny Villar as the guest speaker. They will be again honored in a traditional CIA Testimonial Dinner, to be held also at the Hotel Interport-Makati, details of which are being coordinated by the IIA-P Executive Director Ms. Rodelyn Chan-Lee.

I would say that there has been a rise in favorable and impressive trend of Filipinos reaching the Top over the last seven years. If we were totally candid, in November 2000, Diosdado Mario Blanco Cruz was a Global Top 1 CIA as she topped the world. In South Gold Medal Award. Indeed, a Belle and Dorothea, topping the local entourage of Philippine CIA topnotchers. We turn to November 2000, Harry Peterson R. Sy was the first Filipino who became one of the Global Top 5 CIAs & Excellence Awardees. There are nineteen more Philippine CIAs who likewise belong to the global Top 5 and global Top 25, from May 2001 thru May 2006, namely: Norman Umbrol, Aileen Arche, Mary Grace Quintana, Shiao Arboleda, Thea Mabella, Melanie Ocaya, Jean Tee, Joseph Guinmanan, Sara Ramirez, Rhea Soriano, Jonathan Marquez, Chris Jun Paz, Kathleen Ann Ona, Francisco Lorenzo R., Emmanuel Manalo, Marielle Montalla, Rolando Soliven. And then in 2006, the IIA Philippines received from the IIA, Inc. Int'l Board of Regents the prestigious "2005 Lawrence B. Sawyer Award" in recognition of IIA Philippines' outstanding contribution to the Certified Internal Auditor program.

(Continued from Admin)

Celebrating Filipino excellence in the Internal Audit profession:
7 Global Topnotchers, 174 new passers to be recognized in today's First General Membership Meeting of IIA Phils. to be graced by the Honorable Senate President Manny Villar

CIA CCSA CFSA

List of Successful Examinees for the November 2006 Examinations

Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)

1	MEJIA	Gerardo	Aklan	United Coconut Planters Bank	46	MATIAS	Emma	Marikina	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
2	ABAD	Carmen	Aklan	ITA, Group	47	DE VEGA	Jennifer Angelie	Makati City	Philippine Airport Corp.
3	ABARCO	Rosemarie A.	Pampanga	Pamplonayan & Asociates	48	MENDOZA	Jenn	Quezon	Philippine Int'l. Inc.
4	ARBOLA	Jovelyn	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	49	MENESES	Ramoleen	Laguna	
5	ARCILLA	Jonathan	Pasacao	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	50	MENDOZA	Rosalie	Pasig City	Unilever group corporation
6	ARIAS	Jacqueline	Pasacao	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	51	MERCADO	Ma. Cristina	Tanauan	SM Retail Company Limited
7	ARIZA	Jeff	Mandaluyong	SGV & Co.	52	MILLAN	Maria Inez Cecilia	Pasay	Bank of the Philippine Islands
8	ALEXANDRA	Cynthia	Roxas	University of the East	53	MILLAN	Maria Inez Cecilia	Pasay	Bank of the Philippine Islands
9	ALEJAR	Henry S.	Bohol	Pamplonayan & Asociates	54	MONTEVERDE	Jeffrey	Mandaluyong	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
10	ALEJANDRIA	Rodelyn M.	Pasacao	SGV & Co.	55	MONTEVERDE	Jeffrey	Mandaluyong	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
11	ALEJO	Mariano	Lucena	Bank of the Philippine Islands	56	MIRANDA	Kevin Andrew	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
12	ALVAREZ	Wilfred	Lagayan	Asian Development Bank	57	MIRANDA	Jayne Angelica	Cebu	Cebuana Lhuillier, Inc.
13	ANG	Jacqueline	Iligan	SGV & Co.	58	MONTAÑO	Carina Alexandra	Manila	PRICOR
14	ANGELI	Shalina Angela	Bohol	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	59	MORALES	Ma. Ana	Manila	PRICOR
15	ANGUS	Gerald Da Silva	Cl. Mercedes	Cl. Mercedes Cl. Mercedes	60	NAVA	Rachel Ann	Ayala	Shell Shared Services and Co's
16	ARANAS	George	Bohol	Mapfre Insurance, Inc.	61	NAVARRO	Ma. Cristina	Pasig City	Sprint United Telecom & Co.
17	ARCINIEGA	Clarissa	Iligan	Ayala Land Inc.	62	NEO	Jeffrey	Pasig City	Philippine Long Distance Tel. Co.
18	ARENAS	Kaitlin	Bernardo	Shoko Ventia Pte Drilling Operations	63	OALERIA	Sarah Cecilia	San Diego	Bank of the Philippine Islands
19	ARRILO	Alex	Lipata	AFPMBAI	64	OBREGON	Ma. Ann Mae	Lipata	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
20	BADARA	Mario Henry Abdul	Iskandria	Petron Corporation	65	OCAMPO	Elizabeth	Pasay	Coca-Cola Bottlers Inc.
21	BALAIS	Ivy	Tondo	Shoko Ventia Mgmt. Inc.	66	OCAMPO	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Extraordinary Development Corp.
22	BARCARMENTO	Dolores Francis	Pampanga	University of the Visayas	67	OLIVARES	Yolanda	Quezon	Asian Development Bank
23	BARING	Mark	Bontoc	Manila Transport System Corp.	68	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Pru, Reference, Inc.
24	BAUTISTA	Lorena Jun	Lucena	Philippine Airlines, Inc.	69	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
25	BATO	Arlene	Cotabato	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	70	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
26	BAYLON	Maria Gonzalo	Bontoc	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	71	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
27	BELLO	Jean Glenda	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	72	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
28	BERNI	Hendrik	Lipata	Manila Water Philippines Corp.	73	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
29	BIEN	Jennie Kay	Iloilo	Citibank Philippines, Inc.	74	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
30	BOO	Jennifer Faith	Quezon	Smart Communications, Inc.	75	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
31	CABALLERO	Lorna	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	76	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
32	CABAO	Anthony	Cebu	Cuenca Semiconductor	77	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
33	CAÑETE	Joseph	Castillo	China Banking Corporation	78	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
34	CELICAYO	Ivy	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	79	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
35	CHU	Edison John	Cl.	University of San Carlos	80	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
36	CHUA	Valentina Rose	Abra	Cl. Mercedes & Co.	81	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
37	CHUA	Mary Grace	Bontoc	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	82	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
38	CUARTEL	Jaime	Lucena	San Miguel Corp.	83	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
39	CONDESON	Jonella	Bontoc	Jason Corporation	84	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
40	CONDESON	Rosalie	Bontoc	Asian Development Bank	85	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
41	CRUZ	Ferdinand Ruiz	Tuguegarao	ABA Computer College	86	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
42	CUETO	Lou Ryan	Iloilo	TESDA	87	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
43	DALIGDIG	Karla Maria	Mina	Pamplonayan & Asociates	88	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
44	DANAO	Glenn	Mountain Prov.	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	89	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
45	DANG	Jeffrey	Pampanga	Bank of the Philippine Islands	90	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
46	DAVID	Lyndon	Bontoc	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	91	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
47	DE CASTRO	Ma. Theresa	Roxas	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	92	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
48	DIAMBRILLA	Mario	Sorsogon	Integrated Microelectronics Inc.	93	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
49	DIAZ	Jose Carlomi	Lucena	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	94	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
50	DIMAANEN	Maria Hermenegilda	Tagaytay	Asian Development Bank	95	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
51	DIMAYA	Ramon	Mindanao	Ministry of Canossa University	96	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
52	DUMPIT	Shireen	Bohol-Bil	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	97	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
53	DUMPIT	Shireen	Bohol-Bil	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	98	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
54	ELLAZARA	Ina Jenice	Pasay	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd	99	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
55	ESTANO	Jane	Cotabato	Dep Muntin Transport et al.	100	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
56	ESTEBAN	Jeffrey	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	101	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
57	FAJARDO	Jonathan	Bontoc	San Miguel Corp.	102	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
58	FAJARDO	Roberto	Pasay	Philippine Savings Bank, Inc.	103	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
59	FERNANDEZ	Jane	Cebu	Ace Lyceum & Co.	104	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
60	FLORES	Jayson	Tarlac	Isetan Taiwan & Co., Inc.	105	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
61	FLORES	Belinda	Dinalupi	First Aura Salon & Wellness Center	106	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
62	FORES	Ivy Angela	T	Shamrock Holdings Inc.	107	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
63	FORES	Mario	Camarines	Cebu Pacific Int'l	108	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
64	GALANG	Marjorie	Olongapo		109	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
65	GARCIA	Mary Arthur	Cordon	SYCIP Gorres Velayo & Co.	110	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
66	GARROVILLAS	Blanca	Bontoc	Asian Development Bank	111	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
67	GATILLO	Rodolfo	Ilocos	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	112	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
68	GAVINO	Rosalyn	Lipa	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	113	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
69	GERALDO	Ma. Theresa	Lipa	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	114	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
70	GERONIMO	Marvin	Dagupan	Asiatrust & Company, Inc.	115	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
71	GERNANDEZ	Anela	Pasay	CASP Group Corporation	116	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
72	GIRAY	Marvin	Pune	Toyota Motor Philippines Corp.	117	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
73	GOSOY	Alvin	Quezon	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	118	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
74	GO	Cecilia	Cimarron	Philippine Rice Research Institute	119	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
75	GO	Jean Dominique	Jose	Bank of the Philippine Islands	120	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
76	JOSE	Arlene	Antipolo	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	121	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
77	JUBEC	Michelle	Cubao	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.	122	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
78	KABIGTING	Thelma John	Aurora	Pamplonayan & Asociates	123	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
79	LEE	Robin	Ang		124	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
80	LIM	Gaby	Sta.	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd	125	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
81	LIM	Vina Maria	Pio	Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co.	126	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
82	LINSTON	Lea Karina	Angeles	Pamplonayan & Asociates	127	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
83	LU	Sharon Bryan	Lei	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte. Ltd.	128	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
84	LUCENA	Andrea	Cruz	Banco de Oro Universal Bank	129	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
85	MALAY	William Jr.	Dagupan	Philippine Airlines, Inc.	130	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
86	MANUEL	Michael	Apayao	Mc. Martins Accounting Firm	131	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
87	MAPATAC	Ann	Davao	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	132	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
88	MILLARES	Gracia	Cavite	Jasa Investments Corp.	133	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
89	MANUEL	Elena Marie	Ang		134	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
90	MANUEL	Gary	Intramuros	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	135	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
91	MANUEL	Quenda	Navarro	Meridian Inc.	136	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
92	MARCOCITO	Ferdinand Mark	Bangued	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	137	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
93	MARCOCITO	Ferdinand Mark	Bangued	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	138	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.
94	MARTINEZ	Ryan Mhel	Sariaya	Procter & Gamble Asia Pte Ltd.	139	OLIVARES	Ma. Cristina	Pasay	Philippine Airlines, Inc.

Certification in Control Self Assessment (CCSA)

1	ABANTAO	Gemma	Davao	Ayala Land, Inc.
2	LACSINA	Carlo	Mandaluyong	Asian Philippine Holdings Corp.
3	NACIONAL	Marlene	Malabang	Atlantic Transport System Corp.
4	SY	Romulo	Lu	Philippine Airlines
5	GALLEGO	Richard	Cabral	Davao

Certified Financial Services Auditor (CFSA)

1	AGUILA	Maria Cristina	Ilo	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
2	CALACHO	Cristina	T.	ATMEG Member Companies & Co.
3	CONCEPCION	Nona	Las Pinas	Allied Banking Corp.
4	HERRERA	Ma. Cristina	Cebu	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
5	ROMANO	Irene	Dagupan	United Coconut Planters Bank

Locally, the IIAP measures the quality of the Philippine candidates' results through the average pass rate vis-a-vis the world average pass rate for the November 2006 batch are as follows:

- CFSA (Certified Financial Services Auditor - 100%
- CCSA (Certification on Control Self Assessment) - 83%
- CIA (Certified Internal Auditor average pass rates of 70% Part I, 75% Part II, 73% Part I, and 90% Part III.
- The fact, for the first time, the Philippine banking industry registered a high turnout and dominated very good CIA results, generally surpassing the global average pass rate.
- Two candidates, Emmanuel Bacolo Asuncion, currently with Ayala Land Inc., was able to hurdle the certification exams in just one sitting last November 2006, and Chan is now a successful CIA and CCSA. He recently say, 'this is a first in the history of Philippine CIA!'

On behalf of the IIA Inc. International Board of Regents, Ms. Patricia Bonto IIA, Inc. Director of the Examinations Department, Mr. Alexander Cenizo CIA and Mr. Yuki Tanizo CIA thank our Deputy CIA Exams Coordinators for Manila and Cebu, and the Board of Directors and Officers of the IIA Philippines, we are happy to present to you the individual names of the 174 CIA's/ CFSA Passers from the November 2006 global certification examinations. We now have about 700 Philippine CIAs.

We praise God Almighty for the wonderful harvest, and we congratulate our Global Topnotcher, each of our new CIAs, CFSAs, CCSAs, their Corporate Sponsors, the mentors during the CIA candidacy, honorary staff, CIA trainers who served during the examinations at the Manila site and Cebu site, the BAP Board and Officers, the Certification Committee, and the faculties who all share in the joy of this laudable achievement.

Cheers, and at no. a BAP and the CIAs would usually say, "the ultimate glory belongs to God!"

– Jun Mar D. Vitaterna, CPA, CIA
IIA Quality Coordinator – Phils

Recto, Pichay: Bet needs at least ₱120M

First page of 2

As of Feb. 16, there were 45,817,085 registered voters in the country, according to the Election and Barangay Affairs Department of the Comelec.

The head of the department said the number of votes would still go up because the 45.8 million was based on the reports of 1,096 election officers. Some 950 election officers have yet to submit their reports.

P200 million for admin bet

Given the archipelagic nature of the country, Pichay said the campaign budget of P200 million for each administration senatorial candidate would "be considerably lenient." Yet so far, chances of reaching out to the widest audience possible, and the consequent rise in the votes.

"That's the reality. So you cannot win a senatorial election if you're poor. What if in the middle of the game nobody wants to contribute anymore? We have to change the system. I know that's why I'm running for senator," he said.

Pichay said he had set his initial P20 million.

TV ads eat most of budget

Recto and Pichay were pleased that a huge chunk of the campaign budgets went to television advertisements.

Pichay put it at 70 percent.

Recto has raised P25 million from his family and some businessmen.

"I will raise more. It's so expensive to place TV ads. We're contributing to the trust fund of the Lopez family [which owns ABS-CBN] and the [Gozon, Duavit and Jimenez families who control GMA-7]," he said.

Recto said a senatorial candidate was allowed to place a total of 120 minutes in TV and radio ads plus another 120 minutes for print ads.

The going rate for prime-time placements is about P300,000 for a 30-second TV ad on GMA-7 and about P180,000 on ABS-CBN, according to Pichay.

Recto said the strong peso, its 10-year high stock market and low interest rates could translate into more funds for the candidates, potentially those belonging to the ruling coalition.

Top corporations

He said the top corporations and small and medium enterprises were already reaping the benefits of the fiscal reform programs instituted by the Arroyo administration, so they would naturally go to allies of the President.

Recto was one of the authors of the Senate measure that increased the value-added tax by two percentage points.

"I'm sure the businessmen don't mind them. Our candidates who still lack funds, I'm sure they [businessmen] will contribute to them," said Recto, when asked to confirm that Team Unity members had no problem raising funds.

Pichay does not subscribe to the statement that the support of Bishop Oscar Jaime Imbakumpet could significantly increase one's chances of winning in the senatorial race.

"The Chinese always contribute to both sides," he said. "It will not be you, a million for me, and somebody is happy."

Recto and Pichay linked Jose Jesus Disini Jr., Comelec consultant, to campaign managers of the Genuine Opposition's senatorial slate, for saying that 600 fraudulent votes were running to affect its campaign series.

The Arroyo administration candidates said Garcia's claim was "pure gamesmanship."

The fund shortage prompted GO to postpone campaigning in Iloilo, Antique and Capiz over the weekend.

Reprisal

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, one of GO's candidates, said money was indeed a problem in the opposition camp.

"Funds in hard to come by not because of a lack of enthusiasm and support from fund contributors. It is more of fear of reprisals from the administration, which they say has the propensity to make life and business difficult for them if they are found to be helping the opposition," he said.

Lacson said the administration had an "almost bottomless source of funds."

Recto said he would only spend what he could. "I can't borrow money for my campaign, or sell my assets."

For instance, if he had about 10 relatives he would ask them to shell out P500,000 or P1 million each. "That's big money," he said.

He said he could not speak for the administration's new found saviors who are also knocking on the doors of businessmen and wealthy families.

"I don't know. I'm sure they do," Recto said.

Bert Ilustre, Team Unity's campaign director, said the coalition had decided to pay for the airfare and hotel accommodations of each senatorial candidate and an aide.

All expenses related to sorties of the entire slate will also be covered by its funds, he said.

But the candidates will have to pay for their own posters, streamers, stickers and other campaign paraphernalia, according to Ilustre.

DURAN DURAN. Team Unity vice-chairmen Ralph Recto and Juliet Abaya break away from their campaign sorties to take a bite of the famous durian at a fruit stall in Davao City Sunday.

Allow Erap to campaign, opposition asks Sandiganbayan

First page of 2

still remains a major political force in the country.

Yesterday, he was given permission to visit his mother, who is 102, at her home at Shatle Greenhills in San Juan. He took Rissa Ciara to kindergarten from his Tanay rest house, where he is detained.

Seven of supporters and opposition members seeking Estrada's endorsement for their candidacies had managed to proceed to the house unchecked or harassed.

The men crossed the fence and were under tight security following claims by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales that communist rebels were planning to assassinate the former President.

The Estrada camp, however, claimed the plot was a government ploy to stop him from seeing opposition candidates as the campaign season got underway.

Media access

Tanseco said Estrada's lawyers will ask the court to lift the travel and media ban against Estrada. He said they would also ask that Estrada be allowed to move from Tanay to his Tondo home.

"Media should have access to him," he told reporters. "He's a national figure ... Until he should be free to campaign," Tanseco said.

Tanseco said that while the opposition understood the police restrictions on Estrada's movements, they knew that the orders came from "up above."

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, one of the five opposition senatorial candidates to see Estrada, also questioned the timing of the government's shooting Estrada's communications.

"Its one tightening the screw on[Estrada] is not the guilt count but the executive department. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see the pressure," Lacson said.

During their meeting with Estrada, the opposition senatorial candidates sought the former President's blessings. They also turned the occasion into an opportunity to unite their grassroots over the alleged prospects of widespread cheating in the May elections.

He felt that Estrada's expressed concern over the "changing face of electoral fraud" during his last-ditch meeting with nine candidates, they later said.

The opposition appeared to be concerned about the possibility of massive cheating that it banned automated counting" to be cheated by Sen. Benigno "Bingo" Simeon III.

Face of poll fraud changing

"He is right—the face of electoral fraud is changing," said Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III during the GO press conference at nearby Club Filipino, echoing what they reported was the overriding concern of the former President.

All the GO senatorial candidates except for Senate President Manuel Villar, Sen. Francisco Pangilinan and detained Navy lt. Antonio Trillanes IV paid Estrada a visit.

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'Estrada factor'

Claiming an evident lack of campaign funds, the GO candidates appeared to be banking on the "Estrada factor" to help boost their candidacies.

Fifth why GO people prefer his presence in the campaign trail, unlike the administration candidates who, the GO candidates said, preferred that President Macapagal-Arroyo just pass them money instead of raising their hands during rallies.

Despite the tight police security Lacson and the eight other candidates were allowed to take home having their pictures taken with Estrada.

At one point in the afternoon, Estrada showed up by the windows and alternately raised the hands of Lacson, Pimentel and former Sen. Loren Legarda.

Each of the candidates was also asked to do a one-minute video clip to be shown through voting centers around the country. Each clip was to present candidates introducing themselves and telling the people why they deserved to be in the Senate.

During the San Juan gathering, Estrada asked the party to enlist the support of volunteers lawyers to help safeguard the votes in the provincial and city levels, and assigned people for the municipal level, according to lawyer Barlan Rodriguez, legal counsel for Estrada.

"They're really preparing for cheating in the congressional level where Bro Eddie's position is in danger because of reapportionment," Capistrano said, referring to the need for the administration to succeed Sen. Loren Ritzan to prevent another impeachment complaint.

Cheaters under surveillance

This early, the newly formed unofficial committee was already receiving reports and suggestions on how to prevent cheating in different areas, said former Sen. Ramon Mitra.

"The people who are planning to cheat are already under surveillance," he said.

Describing herself as a victim of fraud, Estrada said she supported the different "tripas, generations of fraud" she said she experienced when she ran as the late president's vice-presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s running mate in 2004.

Besides the alleged shortcomings of election officials in the 2004 elections, Estrada claimed the alleged fraud involved fake IDs into the House of Representatives several months after the May 2004 elections, she said.

"There's even a post-election fraud," she said. (Philippine "But my effort, money and pain were not wanted. If I didn't file the protest... we would not have had proof of the history of this cheating, of what really happened in the election of 2004."

'Manifestations of cheating'

For the coming election, GO candidates raised the alarm over "newly manifestations of cheating."

Sending their list to the appointment of one Jose Rapin "Pepe" Capistrano.

Capistrano said he complained about the Commission on Elections' alleged unfair implementation of the rules on campaign posters.

"If they would remove posters, they should remove all posters, not just the already very few posters of the opposition," he said.

Tanseco said the fact that Estrada was being kept from the opposition candidates and leaders and even the courts indicated that the administration were intent to cheat for his real former election. With a report from AFP

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Angara feels sure he won't get cheated

First page of 2

been exhausted by his decision to run under the administration ticket because this was an issue that has come would be "resumed."

In an interview with INQUIRER editors Thursday night, Angara related how he was chided by his colleagues in the judicial and academic circles about his joining Malacañang's Team Unity slate.

"They said, 'Thank God, you ran—but how did you do it? It's quite vicious and bad incidents," said Angara's.

By siding with the administration, Angara said, "you'll be sure your votes will be counted."

Angara claimed to have profited from the non-Fernando Poe Jr. in the 2004 presidential election. Poe died in December that year until reconciliation by his political allies that President Macapagal-Arroyo had cheated massively to prevent his victory.

Angara apparently continues to believe that Poe was robbed of victory at the polls. He was expected to have said last week that the late movie king would have been the country's president today had he not been cheated.

Bonding with former foes

Asked by the Inquirer if he and fellow former superdelegates Senators Vicente Sotto III and Tessie Aquino-Oreta now formally recognized the legitimacy of Mr. Arroyo's term, Angara said there were no need to make a formal declaration.

Although concerned by his poor in the opposition to his candidacy, Angara—who felt his name was never considered when the opposition drafted its ticket—supposed to have found a new home to the doctrine of "Bahaginting."

As Team Unity members, Sr., Ilustre and Oreta are now bonding with former foes.

No one votes straight

Asked if he would run straight Team Unity in the May 14 polls, Angara said: "Hmm don't advise that."

He noted that Filipinos have historically voted for a mixed slate in senatorial elections.

Aside from being assured that his votes would be counted, Angara said the administration's political machinery particularly its control of the local government network, one another advantage for a candidate running with the ruling party.

'She brings in the goods'

"Based on surveys, the last-case opposition is only 20 percent, which is the same as the administration [bonding]. They said words in the end and what will count is the local organization," said Angara. "Gloria also bring the resources and prerogatives. When she goes, she brings — thousands of sacks of goodies, of rice, whatever."

On the one, as head of the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Angara said he could count not only on the LDP machinery for his support but also on parallel organizations of University of the Philippines alumni, lawyers and teachers.

CGFNS: What it is all about

THE COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) International is a United States-based, non-profit organization internationally recognized as an authority on credentials evaluation of nurses and healthcare professionals worldwide.

The organization ensures that nurses and other healthcare professionals educated in countries other than the United States meet licensure, immigration and other practice requirements in the United States.

A division of CGFNS International, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions, administers the Visa Screen program.

The Visa Screen program is a federally approved screening program for foreign health workers seeking an occupational visa in the United States.

Section 343 of the US Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 provides that "no alien seeking admission for employment in healthcare occupations is required to present credentials from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools or the equivalent) verifying the alien's training, licensing and experience and other appropriate competency in English."

Healthcare includes, in relevant part, nurses, a licensed practical nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist and physical therapist assistant.

The passage of one of two approved examinations for registered nurses (CGFNS International Qualifying Exam or the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses [NCLEX-RN]).

A majority of states require foreign nurses to pass the CGFNS before taking the NCLEX-RN. They are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming.

One of the "frequently asked questions" on the CGFNS website pertains directly to the controversial June 2006 examinations in the Philippines.

Asked if passing the NCLEX or the CGFNS exam by the successful examinees of the June 2006 licensure exam would make them eligible for Visa Screen certificates, CGFNS replied:

"No. The passage of the NCLEX or the CGFNS Examination is only one of four general Visa Screen requirements. Under normal circumstances, passage of either examination will fulfill this particular requirement. However, the license of those Philippine nurses who passed only the June 2006 exam has been determined to be "not comparable" to a US nursing license due to the fact that the licensing examination given by the PRC [Professional Regulation Commission] was compromised.

Therefore, the Visa Screen certificate cannot be issued, as required by US immigration laws and to implementing regulations to those participating in only this compromised examination."

"Does the CGFNS decision have an effect on the validity of the Philippine nursing licensure?"

"No. The CGFNS decision to deny the Visa Screen to the June 2006 passers of the Philippine Nursing Licensure Examination relates only to US immigration law."

The CGFNS itself acknowledged the controversy surrounding the nursing board exam by sending a fact-finding mission to the Philippines last September.

It concluded that the "licensure process for those who received their license as a result of passing the compromised June 2006 licensure examination does not significantly question about the accurate assessment of the competencies of many of those individuals." *Inquirer Research and Nikko Dizon*

FILIPINO nurses who passed the 2006 board exam now face a crisis.

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DOJ: No legal problem if nurses retake exam

Newspaper

will order a retake in order to satisfy the requirements of the US market, I think there's nothing wrong with that. It only means we're taking cognizance of the US request," Sindayen said.

He said the matter "has nothing to do with the Philippine policy on these nurses."

Sindayen said the retake would be done to satisfy the requirement of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), a US-based independent organization that screens foreign nurse applicants in the United States.

A majority of US states require foreign nurses to obtain CGFNS-issued Visa Screen Certificates, a federally approved screening program for foreign health care workers seeking an occupational visa in the United States.

The CGFNS announced on its website Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) that the June 2006 passers would not be eligible for Visa Screen Certificates unless they took the equivalent of Tests 1 and 3 "since failure licensing examination administered by Philippine regulatory authorities" and obtained a passing score.

The CGFNS urged Philippine nurses that in "general, the opportunity for a retake by the examinee "without surrender of licensure" for them to qualify for the Visa Screen Certificate.

The 20-listed group under the announcement a day after the Philippine Supreme Court rejected with finality, in a technicality, the plea of groups, including nursing students, led by Ching Lim, the University of the East Ramon, to order a retake of the tainted portions of the board exam.

The nursing professors questioned before the high tribunal the Court of Appeals decision to order only a selective retake of the examinations, paving the way for the mid-ranking of the passers.

Some 17,000 of 42,000 examinees passed the June 2006 board exam.

The appellate court had ruled that those affected by the PRC's recomputation of grades, which the examinees nullified, should retake Test 2 (medical-surgical nursing) and Test 3 (psychiatric nursing) while questions had been leaked beforehand.

Not binding

Gonzales said the Supreme Court's decision was not binding on the United States.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday ordered Labor Secretary Arturo Brion to appeal for reconsideration of the CGFNS decision.

Brion said he was worried other countries might also require those who passed the June 2006 board exam to retake the questioned portions.

The CGFNS decision came less than a week after American officials approved the Philippine application to be a nursing center for the National Council Licensure Examination.

The NCLEX exam, taken by some 9,000 Filipino annually, is a key requirement for nurses to be able to work in the United States.

New nurses against retake

The Alliance of Bon Haters (ABH), a group of passers of the June 2006 board exam, opposed the government's appeal on the decision not to hold a retake of the tainted test and is confident to appeal the CGFNS requirement.

"There was nothing wrong with the decision of the Philippine government not to order a retake," ABH spokesperson Benito Aquino said.

He blamed Brion and of the Commission on Philippine Overseas for the CGFNS decision. CGFNS representatives met only with Arig and with the PRC before the CGFNS announced its requirement, Aquino said.

Arig had been supportive of a retake of the tainted tests, but the PRC was against it. "He made a mess, and he should shoulder the mess that he started," Aquino said.

Interference

He also said the CGFNS requirement amounted to interference in the country's internal affairs.

Aquino urged Philippine government agencies to work together to convince the CGFNS to scrap its retake requirement.

He said the CGFNS decision was another ordeal that the June 2006 exam passers would have to face.

He said the board's mid-ranking had been postponed for months, hindering its members from working as nurses.

While ABH is against a retake, the president of the Philippine Nursing Association (PNA) supports it.

"It's [their chairman] decision if they want to re-take. And they should be allowed because that's their human right," said Dr. Ruth Pagsisihan, St. Luke Project.

Pagsisihan said the CGFNS decision came as a blow to the June 2006 board passers who want to pursue careers in the United States.

Biggest crisis

She described the leakage in last year's exam as the biggest crisis to hit the profession in the country since she became a nurse in 1974.

Pagsisihan said the PRA should be meeting with "all opposing groups and all nursing leaders" this afternoon to discuss what to do in light of the CGFNS decision.

"We don't want to divide the profession anymore. That's why we will be discussing this. That before we move on official statements," Pagsisihan said.

She said, "We will be making our stand. Our nursing profession has been ruined."

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NEWS

RP tourism campaign rides Singapore streets

By Cynthia D. Balana

A 23-DECIBUTOR CAR ALONG Singapore's major thoroughfares and through its premier shopping district, orchard road, kicked off the "Wow Philippines" tourist campaign in the city-state recently.

In her report to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, Ambassador to Singapore Ileto Azanza said the launch of the motorcade coincided with the kicking of the Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) 2007 and the Travex (Travel Exchange) at the ATF.

Azanza rode in the motorcade joined by Philippine Department of Tourism officials led by Oscar Palabyab, undersecretary for tourism services and regional affairs review, and Eduardo Jacquet Jr., undersecretary for tourism planning and promotions.

Also present at the launch were officers and staff members of the embassy and its attached agencies, and leaders and members of the local Filipino community decked out in Filipiniana.

Anticipating the event was scheduled by the Singapore and local Filipino press.

The motorcade ended at the Fusion Convention Center, where the Philippine booth was manned by sales representatives of hotels, resorts, travel agencies and airlines in the country, such as the Shangri-La Hotels, Marco Polo Davao, Club Paradise Palawan, Philippine Airlines and Seair.

The Philippine booth exuded a resort feel, adorned with lush greenery and a fishing hobo (nipa hut).

Organized by the Philippine Tourism Office in Singapore, the motorcade assembly Ground Supplies, the tail ad campaign will run for three months.

This follows the successful bus ad campaign that ran in the city-state from April to June 2006 and the Mass Rapid Transit train ad campaign promoting the Philippines that ended on Dec. 31, 2006.

From January to September 2006, records showed that Singaporeans made arrivals in the Philippines registered a 18.8-percent increase compared to the same period the previous year, making Singapore one of the highest growth markets for Philippine tourism.

COLORS OF THE WIND. Colorful parade (native outriggers) attracts a cross-cultural and foreign tourists in Iloilo for its annual Paraw Regatta which this year was celebrated together with the Chinese New Year. The parade glide over the waters of the Iloilo Strait to Guimaras and back earning cash prizes for the winners.

Another world-first in mobile remittances from Smart

Smart Services Hub unveiled at the 3GSM World Congress

Speaking before an international audience of top mobile operators at the recently-concluded 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona, SMART Communications, Inc. (SMART) president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno unveiled the Smart Services Hub, an innovative mobile commerce platform that will make it possible for Filipinos abroad to avail of a secure, affordable and convenient remittance service.

Using this platform, overseas mobile phone operators and banks who partner with Smart will be able to offer a service that allows Filipinos in their countries to send remittances to their loved ones wherever they are and wherever they want – with just a few clicks on their mobile phones.

"This innovation will give overseas Filipinos the power of choice as a safeguard for their concerns of migrant workers with respect to remittances – cost, convenience and control," said Nazareno.

"For our partner banks and operators abroad, this will enable them to offer robust and secure mobile value-based remittance services in a cost- and time-efficient manner to migrant populations in their countries," he added. "For Smart's partner banks in the Philippines, this offers a great opportunity to better serve OFWs and their families, including those not currently reached by the banking system."

Pilot projects are underway in the Middle East and Europe. In Bahrain, Smart is working with MTC Vodafone Bahrain and a leading regional bank in the Middle East. A similar arrangement is being set up with a mobile operator and a bank in Italy.

Realizing the need for a global hub that will be interoperable with the Smart Services Hub, Smart will also launch a pilot project with MasterCard as an authenticator, clearing and settlement partner.

With over 14 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and migrants in nearly 200 countries and territories, the Philippines is now the third largest recipient of remittances sent only to India and Mexico. In 2006 alone, Filipinos abroad counted more than US$14 billion – almost 10% of the country's gross domestic product.

Through Smart's m-commerce platform, mobile operators in countries hosting Filipino migrants and OFWs can provide menu-based services that enable their migrant subscribers to use their mobile phones to remit funds drawn from their accounts to a partner bank.

The transaction goes through an authentication, clearing and settlement process that allows the funds to be deposited in an account in a partner bank in the Philippines or via a Smart Money electronic wallet linked to the mobile phone of the recipient here. Both the sender and recipient will be notified via a text message that the remittance transaction has been completed.

The Smart Services Hub makes it simpler and faster for banks and mobile operators to work together in providing remittance services. The net result here and abroad will be better service for OFWs and more funds being channeled through the banking system, thus benefiting the economies of both the sending and receiving countries.

Smart's initiatives are part of the global mobile money transfer (GSMMT) program of the GSM Association, the international trade association representing more than 700 GSM mobile operators across 217 countries and territories worldwide. Supported by 10 of the world's leading mobile operators, this program aims to create a money transfer solution that will take advantage of the pervasiveness of mobile phone networks worldwide in order to lower the cost of remittances.

The announcement of the GSMT generated considerable interest in the 3GSM World Congress, in a panel comprised GSMA President and CEO Rob Conway said: "The creation of a global hub will enable the mobile networks, which now cover more than 80% of the world's population, to offer the world's fast-growing migrant population a convenient way to securely and cost-effectively transfer money to their families back in their home countries." He added that this could raise the amount of remittances worldwide from about $250 billion to as high as one trillion dollars.

The Smart Services Hub is the latest addition to Smart's list of world-first services applications. Since 2000, Smart has been actively pioneering mobile commerce in the Philippines. These services include Smart Money, the world's first electronic wallet (e-wallet) linked to a mobile phone which won the 2003 GSMA Award for "Most Innovative GSM Wireless Service for Customers." It was also named as the "Best Product Innovation" at the MasterCard Marketing Awards in Australia.

In 2006, Smart Load, an micro prepaid reload banking service was cited by the GSMA as the "Best Mobile Applications or Service for the Consumer Market." A year after, Smart launched the world's first mobile phone-based remittance service called Smart Padala for Filipino migrant workers.

An estimated 55,000 visitors from across the globe gathered at the 2007 3GSM World Congress to do business and discuss the latest trends in the mobile phone industry.

The mobile world's movers and shakers gathered for the 2007 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona. Among the key executives from Smart who attended are Smart SVP-Network Services Division Head Orlando B. Vea, Communications and Planning Department Division Head Bernardo G. Fernandez and Wireless Consumer Division Group Head Ricardo L. Wagan.

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Tire factory shut down for pollution

By DJ Yap

A RUBBER TIRE FACTORY THAT was emitting smoke and a foul odor in a barangay in Quezon City has been shut down by the city government for failing to meet health and environmental standards.

Solidus Development Corp., which is located at 102 Horseman's Road, Barra, Novaliches, was ordered closed last week after inspectors said it posed a health hazard to residents in the area.

Complaints against the company, formerly known as Dayton Rubber Corp., reached concerned agencies last year, prompting city officials to launch an investigation.

In a statement, Mayor Feli. cisimo Belmonte is said such businesses should be located in industrial areas, far from residential communities to protect residents from possible health risks.

Inspections conducted by two local government agencies—the Business Permits and Licensing Office and the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department—confirmed that the factory was the source of air pollution in the area due to its emission of toxic fumes and a foul smell, officials said.

On Oct. 9, 2006, the DPLO issued a cease and desist order against the firm.

But the company president, Cesar Uza, appealed the decision and requested the EPWMD to allow them to operate for 16 hours. Uza added that they had installed equipment meant to contain the fumes.

The agencies granted the request but officials later discovered that the company was operating 24 hours a day in violation of the terms of the agreement since the CDO was still in effect.

City officials also found out that the firm's permit to operate issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had expired last December.

Another violation in Cavite operated by the same company was also ordered shut for failing to comply with environmental standards, officials said.

PROMPT RESPONSE
Following a text message sent by Jeric Borja of Barangay Sta. Ana, Taguig City, about the sorry state of DHC Street Extension, Mayor Freddie Tinga sent a letter to Metro Citizen's Call. Tinga's letter read: "Please be informed that the street is now being rehabilitated permanently by the contractor of the Department of Public Works and Highways. Work started last Feb. 1, 2007 and should be completed in the next six months."

ANYWHERE should do something about the passenger lines at the Cubao station of the Metro Rail Transit. I especially during peak hours. I suggest that they install barriers similar to the ones at the Ayala/Buendia/Taft stations. Also, Light Rail Transit Authority should add passenger traffic and outfit disaster-ready ambulances.
—JANET, 38, Cubao, Quezon City

I must say that time to go to the Land Transportation Office branch in Santa Rosa for my license renewal. The place is so disorganized. Window 10, where the licenses are released, gave the clearest service because the staff assigned to man this window answered inquiries to the crowd. Some of the people in the line had been waiting for almost three hours for their turn. I came at 8 a.m. and got my license at 2 p.m. Does it take one whole day for a license to be renewed?
—MARICEL, 34, Cavite

Can the Quezon City government install or the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority check C3 Road near E. Rodriguez as well as Banawe and C. Suarez Streets in Quezon City? These are all national roads and are full of diggings and potholes. Who is going to pay for the repair of our car's undercarriage that is damaged every time we pass these roads?
—BRET TUDOR, 35, M. Natividad Street, Manila

Jacinto cor Nam Pamaluran Extension (near Lambingan Bridge), Mandaluyong City, have turned the street near Pamplott Supermarket into a terminal, giving motorists a headache. The jeepneys load and unload passengers in the middle of the street. Traffic enforcers apparently do not think this is a problem because they don't do anything about it. Who is responsible for this mess?
—PAOLO MENDOZA, 25, San Juan

What do you do with a haggard mutha, despite an earlier complaint filed to the Lupong Tagapamayapa, continues to flood our homes with toxic smoke each time this hypocritical bitch fries something and still refuses to pay even if they use LPG gas stoves and air-conditioning?
—PEPE SANCHEZ, 49, San Manuel, Quezon City

A special day for special kids at Camp Pag-ibig

By Miko L. Morales

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS screamed, laughed and ran around as their parents watched from the sidelines.

Though some of them were unable to express their joy or excitement in words, it was evident by their expressions and actions that they were having the time of their lives.

Special children from all over Metro Manila and neighboring provinces gathered yesterday for the second Camp Pag-ibig which was held at the Bahay Olivo place in Libis, Quezon City.

ANGEL, a special teenager, is a skilled artist despite her disability

The event, now on its 11th year, provides cheer and hope to differently-abled youngsters by giving them a fun-filled day with activities such as singing, dancing, games and art work.

And have fun they did.

Participants, who spent Saturday night to noon at the camp site, woke up yesterday morning, eager to tackle the activities organizers had set up.

After attending Mass and the opening ceremonies, some children showed their skill in art, using crayons, paint and drawing boards to create pictures. Others took part in games while some were content to walk in a pool and talk to their new friends.

Their parents, meanwhile, attended a forum where they were encouraged to talk about their experiences in caring for their special child.

Co-camp director Teresa Marasco told the Inquirer that most people are insecure how to deal with autistic children. The camp, she said, gives children an opportunity to be normal and socialize with others who are in the same situation.

"Given the opportunity, they can be integrated into the mainstream if the people around them are aware of the programs offered by public and private groups to help children with special needs," she said.

No patients in this room, only diners

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While the printers nationwide all brainstorm to serve you!

By Jun V. Serrano Jr.

THE PLACE DISPLAYS SIGNS such as "Operating Room," "Nurse Station" and "Laboratory."

It has wheelchairs, beakers, clipboards and kidney-shaped trays made of stainless steel—things usually found in a medical facility. There's a plastic bottle hanging from an intravenous (IV) pole, too.

But this is one "recovery room" where patients, who just had an operation, are not wheeled to before they are brought to their regular rooms.

Recovery Room is a new restaurant that sits beside two hospitals—Asian Hospital and Medical Center and the Orgtal ng Muntinlupa—at the bustling Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang.

Located on the ground floor of the new Civic Plaza building, Recovery Room is perhaps the only one of its kind in the Philippines.

Waiters and waitresses in scrub suits take the orders of customers who have two seating options: a wooden chair with the backrest wrapped in yellow or beige suede fashioned like a t-shirt, or a wheelchair.

The "Operating Room" signage refers to the kitchen, "Nurse Station" to the cashier, and "Emergency Room" to the toilets.

Owner Jun Acas said Filinvest craftsmen carved the stainless signs and built the tables and three beds, one of which has a huge light lamp (really bear-sized lig-t emblem) on it.

The medical equipment was purchased from Hartsburg, Wendell & Sis. Ctsl., Manila, where medical supplies are bought—or so a sales clerk there said. Acas had the seats and backrests of the wheelchairs covered with suede by Shell Canvas.

With its classy wallpaper design and air-conditioning, the restaurant gives customers the impression that it is a chic patronage or a fine dining restaurant, says Acas, who was named by his father after the British novelist who created the James Bond series.

The concept has so impressed foreigners (Americans and a Japanese) and a Filipino (a physician from Asian Hospital) that they immediately ordered its opening branches of Recovery Room.

Acas said two Americans, who had breakfast at the restaurant, found the place "really different" although they said but about "Nick's Recovery Room," a bar, in the United States.

The restaurateur, however, politely turned down propositions to open branches. "It's too early to open the business in a franchise. We have to fix the menu first," said Acas, a hotelier and a Hotel Management graduate from the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

Specialty

The 67-square meter restaurant, which opened on Nov. 27, 2006, specializes in Kapampangan cuisine, with the offering of "sizzling" or grilled fatty pork (i.e. chicken and liempo) specialties. It also offers "bulacol"—Kapampangan sizzling sisig—and three types of relleno chicken galantina, prawn sherimdoro and lumpia.

"Recovery Room serves delicious comfort food—anything that gives us pleasure," Acas said. "Others may list chocolate as No. 1 on their list, but for me, comfort food is Kapampangan cuisine."

Acas' preference for food from a province in Central Luzon owns from her upbringing. Her mother, a Manila (Pampanga) native, is fond of preparing Kapampangan food.

The restaurant's cook, Beth Garcia, is, of course, a Kapampangan. "I wouldn't open the restaurant without her around," said Acas.

She adds that the business is practically a one-woman show. "I'm the driver, waitress and food-coordinator. I help in the cooking. I also buy the supplies at Farmers Market, Makro and Alabang market. Those are chores I learn to do-adjust," she added.

Affordable, delicious

Since Recovery Room opened more than two months ago, she has found that customers do not go for slow-cooked meals.

Eighty percent of the patrons are nurses, nursing students, doctors and employees of Asian Hospital and Orgtal ng Muntinlupa, and medical representatives.

"Today, we are showing putting out a la carte (with its peninsula price) because customers, even doctors, are trying to save money," says Acas. "Then, of course, they can't wait for long."

Her slow-roasted and tequila-marinated beef, for instance, takes four hours to prepare. "The market likes quick, affordable but delicious meals," Acas adds.

In response, she has come up with budget meals she calls "daily diners." A daily diner consists of rice, viands, a cup of rice and a drink—for only P95.

For Monday, the menu consists of chicken BBQ, inihaw na liempo, fresh lumpia and sinigang sa bayas. On Tuesday, customers can choose from bulsan pakete, kalde carang tanigue and relleno na bangus with camaron.

On Wednesday, there's roasted chicken with lemon grass, beef pochero, vegetable tempura, and shrimp gumbo. Beef caldereta soup, pork BBQ, dare-dareng guling and crabs with sweet chili sauce are served on Thursday.

For Friday, there's beef tapa, chicken escud, pinakbet and kilawin nito. There's beef with oyster sauce, sinigang (pork ribs), lumpiang sariwang and fish fillet with sweet and sour sauce on Saturday.

The dishes are laid out on a wooden bed with wheels and a plastic bottle hanging from the IV post.

Recovery Room also caters to outside tents, packages fast-up with hospital fare and people who take care of relatives confined in the hospitals. "Because of huge hospital bills, even the rich look for affordable but delicious food," Acas says.

Special dietary requirements

Patients who order food usually have special dietary requirements. Their orders include salt-free dishes, fresh lumpia without pork (fish sauce) and MSG, and egg omelette which does not include the yolk. Iron sucker sweetener does not use MSG.

Food deliveries are also available to employees and patients at the nearby hospitals.

Open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. six days a week except for Sunday, Recovery Room serves breakfast, lunch, merienda and dinner.

The concept of Recovery Room is something new that makes some outpatients and their families hesitant to go inside, according to Acas. They think it is part of Asian Hospital and is for convalescing patients only.

"So I tell them to go inside," she says. "Let plain-the-medical-dress because sometimes, they don't get it."

Besides getting customers good food, Acas says she likens to them, and helping some unfamiliar themselves "I sit with them and they tell me their worries."

The work is cut out for this 1995 Psychology graduate turned entrepreneur. "I love entertaining and pleasing people. It gives me a certain kind of satisfaction when people like what I make."

JUN ACAS, the owner of "Recovery Room," poses at the heart of a wooden bed which serves as a table.

CUSTOMERS can sit on an ordinary wooden chair or, if they want, a wheelchair.

Session 1: How To Use Blue Ocean Strategy To Develop and Launch New Products That Will Make Competition Play Catch Up
Ivanh Go, Chairman, Manamith and Fielders, Inc.

Session 2: How To Strategize The A Brand Portfolio of Products
Ronald Guerra, Category Director for Skin and Deodorants and Head of Marketing Training, Unilever Philippines

Session 3: How To Formulate Your Brand DNA for Success
Wenna Pineda, VP-Corporate Marketing, Iphal Holdings

Session 4: How To Benefit From In-Store Consumer Behavior
Benedicto Gil, Managing Director, AC Nielsen Philippines

Session 5: How Suppliers Can Maximize Retail Investment
William Lim, President, Alkemists, Waltermart & Electro World Group and Joanne Lim, Managing Director, Waltermart Supermarket

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DID YOU KNOW

SINIGANG came from the word "sinaukan," which was used to describe the formerly hilly area north of the Pasig River. The term, of Chinese origin, was introduced by the residents, Chinese and Arabs, even before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines. It is now known as a dish of Chinese merchants.

In the 16th century, the Binondo Church was built. The area where San Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino saint, served as a sacristan. The site Pope John Paul II elevated this church in 1982 to the rank of Minor Basilica of San Lorenzo Ruiz.

Cyril C. Bonabela Jaquine Research

Doctor who fed Smith's drug demands sought

LOS ANGELES—IF A PRESCRIPTION needs to be filled in Hollywood, chances are celebrities can find a doctor to do it.

Dodd has had a long history of heeding the drug demands of the rich and famous, including Anna Nicole Smith, the former Playboy Playmate died Feb. 8 after collapsing in a Florida hotel. The cause is under investigation.

This past week, California's medical board opened an inquiry to investigate what to do about Dodd, if there was any misconduct by Dr. Sanford Kaplan, who reportedly prescribed methadone to Smith. The celebrity case website TMZ.com said "Michelle Diaval" was an alias used by Smith in a pharmacy except for a methadone prescription.

Methadone is a popular narcotic painkiller that is used as part of drug addiction detoxification and maintenance programs. Methadone overdoses can cause shallow breathing and dangerous changes in heart beat.

An attorney for Kaplan, a 2006 graduate of Boston University School of Medicine, said in a statement Friday that his client was "treated and appropriate" and he expects to cooperate with the state's medical board.

The allure of having a star as a patient can sometimes influence doctors to follow the rules or break the law, one veteran Hollywood prescriber says.

"It's not easy to say no to a celebrity" said Michael Levine. "History has taught us whether it's Anna Nicole, Elvis or John Belushi, they can get what they want. It's like water."

Levine said celebrities have all their "psychological smoke alarms" and surround themselves with people willing to cater to their needs and who aren't willing to intervene when problems arise.

"We hopefully have friends and family who will step in and help us out when there are problems," Levine said. "But people who don't have the smoke alarms will be overdosed by fire at some point."

Monroe died at 36 from an overdose of sleeping pills in August 1962. She had been under a doctor's care at the time, police said.

Presley, who died in 1977 at 42, was known to travel with George Nichopoulos, a former physician who conquered other drugs to cheats, who also included rockabilly singer Jerry Lee Lewis.

Members of the medical team who performed Presley's autopsy acknowledged in 1990 that the singer was addicted to prescription medications and his death may have been hastened by "polypharmacy," a reaction to mixing many drugs. Nichopoulos lost his medical license but was acquitted of related criminal charges.

"Dog Gone" producer Don Simpson was found dead of a drug overdose in January 1996. Traces of 21 drugs were found in his blood, and at least two doctors were investigated for overprescribing medications for Simpson.

More recently, celebrities have used fake names to get their visits filled. A 2002 probation report stemming from the shoplifting arrest of actress Winona Ryder showed that she used a half-dozen aliases when she sought prescription drugs. The report said Ryder went "doctor shopping" and had 37 prescriptions filled by 20 doctors over a three-year span.

"It's not uncommon for a high-profile person to get a prescription filled under an alias," said Ryder's attorney, Mark Geragos, citing a celebrity's need for privacy. "It happens with great frequency."

The California Health and Safety Code includes several statutes stating that no person who prescribes or dispenses a controlled substance may give a false name or address or make any false statement on the prescription form. Geragos said the case is ongoing.

In Ryder's case, Jules Lasman pleaded no-contest to practicing medicine without a license and given theft, and was sentenced to five years probation. AP

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DepED Department of Education
BENGUET DIVISION
Division Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **Department of Education – Benguet Division Office**, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites suppliers / manufacturers / distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project

Name of Project	Supply and Delivery of School Furniture
Location	Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet
Brief Description	**Package A** – Elementary Table with chair with teacher's table and chair (all wood) **Sub-total – P 972,500.00** **Package B** – Elementary and Secondary Armchair with Teacher's Table and Chair (all wood) **Sub-total – P 764,000.00**
Approved Budget For the Contract: (Grand Total)	**P 1,400,362.00**
Funding source	Government of the Philippines (GOP), 2006 General Appropriations Act (GAA) (75% Allotment)
Contract duration	120 Days
Delivery-ies	"Door to door" delivery to various recipient schools. See attached Requirements of the Bidding Documents

Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184 known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stocks belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified under Republic Act 9183. Only bids from bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II, Instruction to Bidders of the Bidding Documents.

The DepED-Benguet Division Office will hold a Pre-bid Conference open to all prospective bidders on March 5, 2007, 10:00 AM at the Benguet Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet.

Bids must be received on or before March 19, 2007, 10:00 AM at the Benguet Division Office, Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids in excess of the Approved Budget for the Contract shall be rejected.

Bid documents shall be available to prospective bidders upon payment of the non-refundable amount of Three Thousand Pesos Only (P 3,000.00) to the Division Office's Cashier.

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders. Further, the BAC reserves the right to waive any formality in the responses to the eligibility requirements and to this invitation.

(Sgd.) NANCY G. LUMBAS
Chairperson
Benguet Division Office,
Bids and Awards Committee

TYRA actress-Chantal Sandoval in her revealing black dress in picture taken on Feb. 12.

Republic of the Philippines
CAMBANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Thais outraged by star's black skimpy number

BANGKOK—A REVEALING DRESS worn by a music actress has sparked a sort of furor in Thailand, prompting a university to order the starlet to wear to the blind in protest by her team in judgement.

Recalling a scandal sparked by British actress Elizabeth Hurley's safety-pin dress worn to a 1994 film premiere, Thailand's "Nop" has been stepped out in a very little black number to Thailand's equivalent of the Oscars last week.

But the longtime, currently experiencing something of a second stardom, was not impressed with the look, which featured a sheer-both slit from the cleavage down to the thigh, held together by a few sparkly strips of cloth.

The dress, and her apparent lack of undergarments, caused a public outcry with the Thai press reporting the 23-year-old be offending Thai culture with the barely-there outfit, and web sites hosting lively chat.

Since the dress made its debut at the awards ceremony on Feb. 9, there have been tears, apologies and retributions in Thailand, which is increasingly seeking to balance its traditional Buddhist values with the country's more-liberal side, which attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists a year.

"I feel really guilty and sad. I would like to apologize to Thai people," said Chotima, who has had a handful of small film roles and is currently studying at Thammasat University's liberal arts faculty.

"It seems like my commitment causes a crisis," she said between sobs at a press conference at the end of the week, during which she demurely buttoned up in a red cardigan and pink-collar shirt.

Her Bangkok-based university on Thursday decided to take appropriate action against its 3rd-year student.

"We gave her a warning and asked her to do 15 days of community service, reading books and researching if we killed people," the Thai-language Daily News quoted the university's deputy president, Pattaya Thammasaroratchol, as saying.

But the film industry was not so hostile. Thailand's biggest production company, Sahamongkolfilm, said it would not be involved part to their upcoming movie "Bounded Samurai."

"We are not a post-company, I don't like the actress to stress her body it is not a good image," Khun Sod manager reported Somsak Techaratanaprasert, the company's president, in saying.

"All are Thai, we are a Thai production company, we have to preserve Thai culture," he added. AFP

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirico

Bush dodges 2nd damaging censure

WASHINGTON—US SENATE DEMOCRATS, thwarted in their bid to force a debate on President George W. Bush's planned US troop buildup in Iraq, were expected on Sunday (Monday in Manila) to step up their pressure on the administration in order to force it to change its strategy in the war.

"The Republican leadership can run from this debate but no Democrat believes they can't hide. The Senate will keep fighting to have President Bush set a change course in Iraq," said Majority Leader Harry Reid at a news conference Saturday, minutes after Democrats failed to break a Senate deadlock blocking debate on Bush's unpopular Iraq strategy.

Reid said other leading senators from both sides on the aisle were to by the television talk shows except Sunday to explain their positions in the stalemate—and their plans for the future.

Sixty votes were needed to end the 100-seat Senate to move to a vote on a resolution condemning the administration's plan to send 21,500 additional US combat troops to Iraq.

But only a total of 56 senators, including seven Republicans, voted to allow debate to start. Four votes short of the minimum. Thirty-four senators voted against.

With the symbolic votes over in both chambers, the White House issued a disbelieved calling for broad congressional support in upcoming spending bills for Iraq.

"This week's voting gave the world sightings of democracy's vigor. The next votes should provide unmistakable assurance of this nation's resolve in achieving success supporting the cause of democracy and stopping terrorist haven in their ultimate aim of bringing their violence to our shores," the White House statement said.

Reid vowed that Democratic would keep up the pressure, despite Saturday's setback.

"The Senate is not done with this issue. It's too important to be brushed aside," he said.

"The administration's failure has put us in a deep hole. It's time to start climbing out of that hole rather than digging it deeper," he said.

Fellow Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer was even more pointed in his criticism.

"Just like in the days of Vietnam, the president will mourn, the president still think he has no strategy he will have to change his strategy and the vast majority of troops will be taken out of harm's way and come home," he said on the floor of the Senate, referring to the Vietnam War debacle.

Democratic 2008 presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Joe Biden and Chris Dodd voted in favor of holding the debate.

For their part, Republicans crowed at having blocked Democrats for the second time in less than two weeks from holding a vote condemning Bush's plan to boost US troop strength. AFP

Rio carnival no sex party, Brazilians say

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL—The very idea that American soldiers on leave from Iraq would see Rio's carnival as a sex party here Brazilians outraged.

A report in Britain's The Guardian newspaper that US soldiers were coming to Rio for rest and recreation—especially sex, condoms—prompted many Brazilians to say that the foreigners have it all wrong.

Despite all the tipsy, carousing, flesh-on-display festivities in the streets of downtown Rio together in the first full day of carnival celebrations, Brazilians say the spectacle is not all about sex. They see it as a celebration of the body, closer to the spirit in the Olympics than in the strip bar.

While US soldiers would barely be seen in the crowds, Brazilian complains about those who come mainly for sex tourism, and opportunities around to abound during Copacabana beach.

"If they come here from Iraq they wouldn't go back!" said Bruno Sirotti, 41, an architecture firm Bem Jimmy who was surrounded by barely dressed women as he drank at an outdoor bar.

Brazilians say policemen at carnival is about sensuality. Yes, sexual images abounds in the samba schools, and thousands of revelers dance shirtless only on the sidelines. But nudity can be in different circumstances in Brazil than in many other countries.

"Here, nakedness doesn't automatically lead to sexuality, it leads you to aesthetic appreciation. A woman is dancing but it's not pornographic. It's a collective experience of consumption of bodies, like at the Olympic games," said Roberto Da Matta, a retired University of Notre Dame sociology professor and author of Carnivalo, Rogues and Heroes. AP

A BEVILLER of Grazieia da Porsuite samba school during carnival celebrations in Sao Paulo, Feb. 18. AFP

Bioengineering helps mice recover teeth

PARIS—IN A WORLD FIRST, Japanese researchers reported Sunday they had successfully coaxed stem cells to make teeth that were covered in a lab dish from single cells.

Writing in the journal Nature Methods, a team led by Takashi Tsuji of the Tokyo University of Science describe how they took tissue from the developing mouth and epithelial cells—that develop into a tooth.

They first grew each cell type separately to make larger numbers of them and then injected them into a sticky protein called collagen.

The mash grew into a tiny tooth about 1.2mm long. The researchers then implanted the nascent 9-mm-old rabbit incisors and restored the lower jaw of mice with the bioengineered teeth.

After two weeks, the transplant was found to be growing perfectly with root, enamel, dentin pulp, bone, blood vessel—the same compact tissue and structure as a normal tooth.

The study "provides the first evidence of successful reconstitution of an entire organ via the transplantation of bioengineered materials," the authors say. AFP

Papon, war criminal; 96

PARIS—FRENCH WAR CRIMINAL Maurice Papon died on Saturday aged 96, four years after being released from a jail term for his role in the Shield War II deportations of French Jews to their death camps.

A senior official under the wartime Vichy government, Papon was sentenced to 10 years in jail in 1998 for his role in organizing the deportation of hundreds of Jews to Nazi Germany, where most of them were killed in concentration camps.

If Papon "was able to die peacefully, it was not like ours for those he sent to their deaths," Benjamin Abtan, the president of the Union of Jewish students in France told AFP moments after he died.

"The Japan trial was a key moment in the construction of memory of the Holocaust in France," he said.

"We will always remember him as a criminal, but also as a symbol of the responsibility of the French state in order to attempt to destroy Europe's Jews," he said.

Marie-George Buffet, the French Communist party's candidate for French presidency, said "Maurice Papon's death does not turn the page on his crimes".

PAPON in a 1981 photo. AFP

And Michel Sibidy, a spokesperson for Papon's victims, said he regretted that Papon only served three years behind bars.

"He paid 20 thousandth he only stayed three years in prison, in a gilded prison."

Papon was released from jail in 2002 on medical grounds. He suffered from heart and kidney ailments, and has been living at his family home at Gretz-Armainvilliers, 20 miles (32 km) east of Paris. AFP

Lunar New Year starts with a loud bang in China

BEIJING—LUNAR NEW YEAR started with a bang Sunday as Chinese 1.3 billion population ushered in the Year of the Pig with food, drink and massive fireworks displays.

Huge explosions rocked Beijing overnight as residents set off a record number of fireworks to scare away evil spirits and welcome good fortune for the New Year.

Hospitals are expecting a baby boom for the year of the pig, considered one of the most auspicious in the Chinese zodiac.

As Chinese people looking forward to a week off work, New Year's Eve on Saturday focused on family gatherings, temple visits and extravagant firework displays which continued into New Year's day.

The previous week saw what has been described as the world's biggest human migration, as hundreds of millions of Chinese jostled to train, planes, buses and boats to make it home for the festivities.

Deluded from the celebrations, however, were workers building venues for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, who were ordered to work through the holiday week, media reports said.

For most other Chinese celebrations began Saturday with incessant fireworks cracking throughout the day, building into a massive climax of sound and light from neighborhoods across the city that kept the 15 million population awake into the early hours.

The Chinese, who invented gunpowder, traditionally set off fireworks to scare away evil spirits that bring bad luck.

Two years ago, the Chinese capital lifted a 12-year ban on fireworks that had been imposed for safety reasons.

The vice-director of Beijing's Public Security Bureau said more fireworks were set off than last year.

"This year more fireworks were sold and they were set off for longer than last year," Yu Hongyuan told state media.

All police leave was cancelled as the city government mounted a tight security operation involving more than 400,000 officials, according to reports, including fire department, neighborhood watch teams and internal security personnel.

Local state media reports said more than 100 fires were reported across the city and 125 people were injured, three seriously, including one person who lost both eyes, last year. 26 people died in China during New Year celebrations. AFP

US Marine gets 8 years for Iraq slay

CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA—A US military judge on Saturday sentenced a US Marine to eight years in prison after he pleaded guilty to murdering an Iraqi in the city of Hamdaniya last year, military officials said.

Lance Corporal Robert Benning-ton, 22, pleaded guilty on Tuesday to voluntary manslaughter, assault, and making a false official statement in the killing of an unarmed Iraqi civilian in Hamdaniya, officials said.

Benningfield, who had initially faced the death penalty, became the fifth US serviceman to admit involvement in the death of Haditha residents based in Hamdaniya outside Baghdad on April 26, 2006.

Prosecutors say seven Marines and a Navy medic kidnapped Awad from his home and killed him before firing a cover up to make it appear he was killed in the 52-year-old pensioner was an insurgent.

Four other servicemen have already pleaded guilty to charges relating to the case and have given unfavorable testimony ranging from 12 to 21 months.

The killing is one of a string of incidents that have tarnished the reputation of US forces in Iraq. AFP

Paraglider survives 3-hour, high-altitude storm ride

GERMAN champion paraglider Eva Wiesenhofer recounting ordeal. AP

ZURICH—EVA WIESENHOFER was the luckiest woman alive.

The 27-year-old German paraglider from Austria when she was accidentally sucked up in the storming debacle of smoke into during a training run in her paraglider. Pushed unconscious in freezing conditions for about an hour, and managed to land safely.

But Wiesenhofer, the top-ranked women paraglider pilot in the world, is undeterred by her experience and is itching to fly again.

Wiesenhofer's extraordinary ordeal has been likened to climbing Mount Everest in 15 minutes by experts. Her altitude reading on her instrument was 9,045 meters—some 1,000 meters higher than the world's tallest peak.

Experts have speculated that the pilot was caught in a powerful thunderstorm and was lucky to survive. Wiesenhofer's equipment was destroyed—somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 meters—and she was forced to free fall for 1,000 meters before she could open her parachute.

"I could hear lightning to front of me, behind me, around me," she told reporters afterwards. "It was dark, everything was brown and I knew I cannot do anything, just hope and pray. I will come out somewhere, hopefully alive."

Wiesenhofer was able to radio for help after she had been found by a search and rescue team on Friday afternoon, she finished out at the area surrounded upwards at a rate of almost 400 meters a minute.

When she awoke, she was drifting at 6,000 meters and her body and paraglider were covered in ice.

Despite the limited she was conveyed to ice, her body blackened by frostbite. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Manotoc DQ'ed but Canlubang keeps PAL title /A30

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa

■ Green rules Slam Dunk /A31

Miñoza settles for 2nd in Jakarta

JAKARTA—ALL IT took was a double bogey-6 for Frankie Miñoza to miss out on a European Tour card and an invitation to the British Open.

But that did not stop the Filipino star from coming to the top of the Asian Tour's Order of Merit.

Miñoza, posting down three birdies in a five-hole stretch, from the ninth, gave up two crucial shots on the 14th and was unable to close out the lead. He closed out with a 71 and settled for second on 27th, one stroke off winner Mikko Ilonen of Finland in the Enjoy Jakarta Indonesia Open at the Damai Indah Golf and Country Club on Sunday.

Ilonen topped an hot bogey at 14 to close out with a 70 and four-round total of nine-under-par 279 for victory in the tournament jointly sanctioned by the European and Asian tours.

The winner gets a two-year exemption in Europe and an invitation to the British Open, one of golf's four Majors.

PHARMIDE PHILCO Inc. all on the 15th hole in Sunday's final round of the Indonesia Open 2007 at the Damai Indah Golf and Country Club in Jakarta. Miñoza went on to settle the hole tournament leader Mikko Ilonen of Finland. AP

Miñoza shared second with Australian Andrew Tampion who had a 69 and India's Mir Kapur 107.

Still, the runner-up finish in the $1-million tournament was worth $76,296 (about P3.6 million) for Miñoza and raised his earnings to $147,156 on the Tour, putting him all on top of the Order of Merit.

South Korea's Suk-Jong-yul, who played in the final flight along with Miñoza and Ilonen, finished at 5-under 279 after a 71 to tie for fifth and sixth places with Thailand's Thammanoon Sriroi.

Miñoza rallied from three strokes down to the front nine to go toe-to-toe with Ilonen at the back following his miscue on the 14th.

"I hit it left and had a bad lie," Miñoza said of his double bogey on the 14th. "I hit a flier again and my third shot was aside from my first so it went into the rough.

"I have been thinking about it yesterday all night," Ilonen told reporters. "I had a really good start to the week."

Whether it's the mean exterior or its leather seats that you're looking at, there's so much to admire with the new Ford Escape. This genuine off-roader has a Control Trac II 4x4 system that lets it go where other so-called SUVs can't. And it's even more impressive in action. Put its 2.3L VVT engine with Drive-by-wire technology to the test and be overwhelmed by its lightning-quick responsiveness, smooth power delivery and superior fuel efficiency.

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Make Every Day Exciting

WBO king Montiel vows to stop Gorres in 1st round

FEARLESS Montiel is flanked by promoter Sammy Gello-ani (left) and father Manuel during the press conference.

By Edson L. Laguntay
Contributor

CEBU, PHILIPPINES—BECOMING WBO superfeatherweight king Kennedy Montiel yesterday vowed to stop Filipino challenger Z Gorres right in the first round of their title fight here on Saturday.

Showing no signs of the long journey he took from Mexico to Cebu, Montiel said he knows exactly how to beat Gorres.

"I will knock out Gorres in the first round," said Montiel through interpreter "I mas hacer eso."

Montiel, accompanied by his fulltime manager Manuel G and handlers, spoke during an initial press conference organized by promoter Sammy Gello-ani at the Cebu Mactan Export Zone.

Asked about his preparation and how he would fight in front of a hostile crowd, Montiel said the fight his been wherever he is.

"Since early childhood my father has always taught me how to fight in a strange territory," he said.

Also present at yesterday's press conference was Gorres' manager Michael Aldrupat.

Gello-ani thanked Team Montiel for their professionalism in coming on time. "The Filipino people are happy to welcome you here in Cebu," he said.

"We heard the highest respect for Fernando Montiel," said ALA Boxing manager Aldrupat. "We're looking forward to a great fight."

Manuel G said his son feels good about Saturday's fight and is confident by the 10-time flight titleholder.

"You will not be disappointed," he said. "You will see a great champion today."

A press conference will be held on Thursday at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel, where Montiel and former will meet for the first time. The official weigh-in takes place on Friday at the Rajah Sikatuna Hotel, the official home of Team Montiel.

WBO president Paco Valcarcel and vice president for Asia Pacific Juan Panamello will be arriving on Wednesday.

Golden Boy Promotions vice president Eric Gomez and interpreter Jun Hutchinder Jimenez Jovalencia are arriving on Thursday.

Canlubang keeps crown despite Manotoc slip-up

By Dennis B. Gonzales

CANLUBAN DE ORO—IT'S TOP $500 INSIDE TO crowd in an unexpected twist, but it didn't really matter as premiereform Canlubang easily retained its hunter's championship yesterday to the 6th Philippine Arabian Interclub tournament here.

Tommy Manotoc's duo beat 52 points over to snagle after he tapped a wrong course and, Canlubang's strength, however, was not what the Laguna-based squad still won by 15 points over a Lanta team whose standards proved no match in head-to-head clashes with their counterparts in the first round at the Pueblo de Oro course.

"My mistake," said the 60-year-old Manotoc after he realized his error where he went over his countermark again at the scorekeeping committee load gone over his course and told him he posted 56 points.

The last day was a 1 rewarded by his mates Gaby Carvalho of Alabang, as his 1500 lole where he made a con -9. Before turning it, Manotoc had carefully counted backed the figures on his scorecard against the score he kept he himself somehow found no discrepancy.

Canlubang last seven points as a result with Lara Magcamit's 44 getting counted toward under the right-to-ding Bowlcourse found.

But still Big Banner mat skipper Tony Olivos each pitching 50 points and Bobby Perez and Luigi Yulo contributing identical 49 markers, Canlubang, which started the day just six points up on Lanta, still stumbled a leading 240—KKJC if Paddle to clinch its second straight crown on a 498-467 count.

Francis Gamos, six-race par on his front race, rallied to the finish on points that emerged as the best score of Lanta for the day. Team captain Iggy Clavadia managed only 47 after a superb 53 at Del Monte the other day.

Rufino Lincallo 46, another 47 by Asuncion Nati-Gallegos and a 46 by Rong de Guzman completed the scoring for Lanta, which missed the services of Freddie Mendoza who failed to line up due to a flare stomach. Mendoza counted only a 44 in the first round.

Manotoc rallied with 23-to-ratings third place in 47's with Manila Golf placing fourth, 464-462, over Manila Southwoods, whose Ramon-star Dan Aning was still upset in the first round with an after a 49 at Del Monte.

Cochon Bonifacio de Oro came from behind to capture the Brandeis crown with 466 on five Orinoco shelling by 14 points and both by added 36. Last year's champ Wash Wash, hobby farmer Eric del pointe, was fourth at 454.

"Now everything has happened in my golf career," Bonifacio, a longtime hunter outboard player, said after his victory that DQ for signing a wrong scorecard raised 6 months to further improve the future.

The fourth straight overall title in the 10-year-and-above category that Manotoc have went to Del Monte's Jessie Dalit, whose 16 at the home course earned the tabwinder in his 10-166 deadlock with Lanta Iahong's Olivos.

The win set up Canlubang for another title double with its team's regular team again favored over Manila Southwoods and 2004 champion Del Monte when the scorepiece event ends Wednesday.

A second title in one race in the Sportsmen's Division at Del Monte after Ben Bermejo's Tacoma Wanna steal the pot 71-80-with 1+4 loss while playing to the company of Wimmer Santos of Iloilo, George Bunsuguiat of Sorsogon and host members of Lumbia.

Like Alexis Gonzales of Lumbia, Manotoc won a secondary first class Manila-El ticket.

Ralph Rubio aced on to clinch the Sportsmen's title with 42-9. Del Monte took first-and-place over Bunsuguiat on the strength of a better earthworm score.

BACK TO BACK: Canlubang's champion crew celebration. From left, Dindy Perales, Lino Magcamit, Dan Perales, Reg Berjes, Tonang Maestrez, Luigi Yulo, team captain Tony Olivos, Rollie Virag and Boss Adriano.

Ever Mine Now nails 1st Imported Stakes leg

By Manong V. Castillo

CARMONA CASTLE—EVER MINE (NOW DQ) drop to the final quarter under Jonathan B. Hernandez yesterday to take the first leg of the 2007 Imported Stakes down 4 1/4 the Lion Lizards Lizzie Dash Speed.

The six-year-old has more mode boy charge by the mid-to-stay hospital Deputy Hardaday by half a length and runs an impressive one minute and 33 seconds for the 1,500-meter race.

Just off to the slight lead choice in the six-horse field early under JONATHAN out of the drop, the handle of $900,111, Ever Mine How was set as a frontal date for home to start his 2007 campaign on a bright note.

The victory was worth P900,000 for owner RJ Hernandez.

The Bal Mazuk-owned Deputy Hardaday, who actually led by a length when the field assumed the third bend, settled for the runner-up prize worth $300,000.

Tony Gomez, with Lord Louise aboard, and Dimension, under Jessie B. Garcia checked in third and fourth for P300,000 and P400,000, respectively.

The field was actually here had to vote to the final 400 meter mark and Deputy Hardaday shot out of the pack to a healthy one length going into the hit back.

But the 20-year-old Hernandez rookie Ever Mine Now beg the rail throughout every when second choice Gloss and Hotstar at the early pace to breathe down to strike end.

Hernandez applied the whip furiously as the daughter of American Odyssey out of Ever Mine-sider responded with a formidable kick in the drive for the wire.

Glow and Hotstar, incidentally, paid the price and finished dead last under Tony Gomez, just behind longest shot Zeta.

The next big race happens this Sunday at the Santa Ana Park in Makati with the holding of the Philracom Classical's Cup.

Coming soon: A true people's champ

BARE EYE

Rhicardo Trinidad

FILIPINOS HAVE FOREIGN MEMORY OF THE national rooting team, but left his arena bound backyard in Chicago and was redoubtful to return to Orlando last night.

He's heading straight for Ark, summary Cebu.

No, the lanky sportsman was not merely escaping horrible air-conditioning in Chicago.

It's pre-departure text message. Blue-haired he's driving to Sandal, the famous national open Ship for back had helped populate, tonight from the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

It will be a natural flown first for the home-ish hold hopes before anything else.

But before this report strays all the way to the chilly, air-spoiled Pangloo Beach off Taglibawan in Bohol, an hour and half by ferry boat from Cebu City, Hero's main mission must be hurled.

He's here to be an integrals for the Moment of Truth and in Cebu on last night, Feb. 24.

Also sure to Manila last July for the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar Larios bout at the Araneta Coliseum.

He had seen practically all Pacquiao fights live in Las Vegas, including the Grand Slinky showdown wherein the Sherman Manuel and the legendary Erik Morales at the Thomas & Mack Center last November.

After valiantly losing a fight at his decision-ing here, Hero flew home from Vegas, stayed put for a week, before next flying to Orlando.

There, in Tampa, he witnessed the unbeaten Hary "Boom Boom" Bautista score an easy knockout.

* * *

Hero is here on a private mission.

He wanted to see for himself the real Hary Boom Bautista, touted as the next Manny Pacquiao.

So, he volunteered his and other Bautista fans' to see another hero in Tampa in early December.

How good was he and unsigned.

But, just like with the ever-growing number of Boom Boom fans, he continued to wonder how such great this dusky Bukidnon bombero.

No, Hero would not buy the initial suggestion that Boom Boom was being coddled and spoon-fed with patsies to run over Filipino hosts.

Moreover, his appetite for fast-slug-slug action got aptly schooled by both that Ricky Hatton, the Glasgolous whose Bautista would fix fight-ing on Saturday, is a southpaw.

* * *

That info, about Boom Boom's next five lasting-ready tangle, emanated from the camp of respected Cebu sportsman Antonio R. Aldrupat.

Southpaw is no sin with Aldrupat himself taking pains to get a match for for the unbeaten Bautista, Montiel's championship card where 2 Koreans goes for the World Boxing Organization super flyweight crown of Malaysia Fernando Montiel, in a must-see.

The cut of golden mestizo Bautista and Filipino nurse of their gloves are both desirable.

Bautista, 22, is 21-0, with 16 KOs.

Viloria, 23, is 19-1-1 with 13 KOs.

In event, the twin main events should also help determine whether there's boxing in the Philippines outside of Pacquiao/Boxing.

* * *

Boy, this is not to say Boom Boom, who also rose from bitter poverty, has already grown to watch to properly rival Pacquiao in popularity and relevance.

No, sir. The truth is that, there are many boxing devotees who have started asking: Bautista, promise but, and Bautista to hand his power and talent, would not turn out to be as true-bodies gentleman champion Bert Pacquiao.

Who knows? With his principles and values, not to mention the upbringing he has been gifted and handles, Tony Aldrupat, Bautista may not be caught smoking into the next field of Philippine politics.

Let's pray Boom Boom rose to his calling and, God willing, one day help reform our system of government, instead of jumping around and upstaging the worst political entertainers.

Of course, it will take a true people's champ to do that.

SPORTSWATCH

Pasig River 42K launched at Forum

THE FIVE-DIVISION RACE TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP LEG OF THE PASIG River 42K was launched at the Forum Shopping Mall in Ortigas Center yesterday. Among the special events of the Pilot Pasig Subdivision Foreman Fred Lady Jonathan Tilling Thomas heads the parade sponsoring in the public courts, program, and first-ever shift Sports Radio and sponsored by Pagcor Manila Mayor Jim Jimenez and Manila Sports Council Chair Atty. Ali Atienza. PSBA Dir. Patricia Hernandez and Lyn Ocampo for Safety Angeles Bautista, Philippine Sports Commission Chair Jolo Revilla, Philippine Olympic Committee Chairman Jose Cojuangco, PSBPA co-chair Tonia Rosario, Rev. Elmo Gonzalez of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association and Rigoberto Tinio. The forum starts at 10:30 a.m.

70 fights today in PCAP Makati derby

SEVENTY MATCHES HEAD THE FIRST OF A FIVE TOURNAMENT PHILIPPINE Carrom Association of the Philippines (Carom) derby, first leg of the PCAP season, at the Makati Coliseum with Rolling Chalky Jose and Glenn Marianito as sponsors. Entry fee is P2,000. Atty. Victoria APRU Guillermo heads the list of officials of the PCAP, Inc. Also on hand are Executive Vice President Angelo Bautista, Board Members Ronnie Magsaysay and Atty. Rafael Recto, Secretary Jonathan Revilla, Jr. Jr. and Executive Assistant Ruth Ann Abaya. A 3-day event, the PCAP Sports and Amusement Corp. operation of Makati Coliseum, announced yesterday the appointment of Pay Oliveros as team trainer of the PCAP Makati ring-contending carrom men.

Big Thursday treat for Roliyon cockers

LOCAL PARTICIPANTS IN DERBIES AT THE PUGLIOS RIDGE COCKPIT IN Pantabangan will get a "big treat" from cockpit owner Nelly Ligot on Thursday as promoter unleashes the annual Champion de Cockers Derby. Ligot said that aside from Roliyon cockers, participants in the derby will be treated to a free lunch. Pit derby accommodates bantam weight entries and non-derby entries. "With this kind of lay-out, a participant may hold two or three entries and therefore has a bigger chance to win the championship," Ligot said. Two-event elimination rounds are scheduled on Feb. 22, 23 and 24 while the three-event championship takes effect Feb. 26.

PATA GOLF AT UTA ELEVEN: The Philippine PATA Agents Travel Association and Golfers Pride are co-sponsoring the Pista Cup on Feb. 24 at Sta. Elena Golf Club. Shaking hands after signing the sponsorship deal are Travelport marketing director Cherrye Mutik and Pista Cup co-chair Ivan Frank Alcaraz. Looking on are Pista president Alfred Chevassus and Golfers regional manager Andrew Ling.

Manganti, Duay rule Alabang's Mango Tee

RIVENDARSH AWARDED MANganti and Arnold Duay posted their two wound in tougher conditions and won the 22nd Mango Tee tournament of the Alabang Country Club last seven-under recently.

Manganti, next Bicol college classmates at Magsaysay, made a 77 for a two-stroke round and improved to an 81 on their return to the course where the rivals hiked and rode golf carts were banned to submit one of two tournament-best 288 totals.

Their big second-day effort also proved crucial as it was used to break ties on counts by Rey Cinpoche and Bondo Antiporda who carded 81-76 also for 288. They settled for the Class D prizes.

Gaby Castellanta and Ring Dimasuay players who were named the golf spectators of the club, romped off with the low gross award of the tournament as presented by Filipinas Shell and Board Commissioner Jose Thay-Shel 65 and 67 for a 32-over par 136.

Fifth Seattle Hotshots Tokyoites (Class A), Pedo Pantaleon Bros Al. Bonet (Class B), Renato Bagtasos Bros Alonzo (Class C) also joined the event's finish-of-winners.

Sonnie Bolaños scored 71-81-152 to beat Mike Domenio Bros Olives by four.

Pantaleon Alfonso had 75-72-147 and had a good score from Jun de Guzman of Garcia.

Rafael de Alfonso carded 74-75-149 to edge Arthur Chong Mario Santos by one, while Carlos Angeles Jr. were eight up on Kenji Concepcion, Roy Velasco.

Amateurs to 'OJT' with PBA squads

By Jaime Maravera

THE COUNTRY'S TOP AMATEURS MAY SUIT up for the Philippine basketball Association even without passing through the draft via an apprenticeship program approved by the board to help teams that will be affected by the league's commitment to the national team.

The board of governors approved a rule that allows PBA teams, whose players will be tapped to represent the country in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association and Fiba-Asia tournaments, to hire the likes of JC Intal, Eric Reyes, Jason Castro, Mark Isotorsa and Marvin Cruz on an interim basis.

INTAL

CASTRO

"The program will allow amateur players to experience and learn the ropes in the pro league," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala. "It's like an on-the-job training for them."

The players will be put through an unprotected draft, and the teams with the most points contributed to the national team will pick first. In case of a tie, the order will be determined by their finish in the ongoing Philippine Cup.

The country will be fielding six all-pro teams in the Asian tournament in Bilay and the Fiba-Asia ride in July. The 12 players and two alternates named to the national team will not be allowed to suit up for their PBA clubs in the Fiesta Cup.

Amateurs drafted will be paid as much as P50,000 apart from educational assistance, medical insurance coverage and other perks.

Only players who have never applied for the PBA draft and have at least seen action in the PBL or other commercial leagues are eligible.

Green new 'sultan of slam'

Jason Kapono fell just short of an event record while winning the 3-Point Shootout.

LAS VEGAS—BOSTON'S GERald Green capped All-Star Saturday with an acrobatic leap over a table to win the dunk contest, and Miami's Jason Kapono fell just short of an event record while winning the 3-Point Shootout.

Green, the Celtics' 20-year-old swingman, performed his two most memorable dunks in the first round before that final leap over a table bearing the all-star game logo for a wrenching jam.

His first made an electrifying run-headed slam on an alley-oop pass off the side of the backboard from teammate Paul Pierce in the first round. Green then jumped over fellow finalist Nate Robinson while wearing the No. 7 Celtics' jersey of 1995 dunk champion Dee Brown—and clutching his eyes in the crook of his elbow in an homage to the team's exuberant fan-favorite Rookie.

"It's tough to be creative since just about every kind of dunk has been done," Green said. "I tried to pull something an nobody had seen before."

Green easily won over the five-man judges' panel of Michael Jordan, Julius Erving, Dominique Wilkins, Kobe Bryant and Vince Carter—particularly after Robinson, the diminutive 2006 champion, missed nine straight passes on his final dunk before finally landing a one-handed spin move.

Earlier, Kapono beat slam Gilbert Arenas and Utah Jazzman Deron Williams in the first round, 24—23, and then edged Phoenix Suns guard Steve Nash, the fourth-year pro who finally blossomed with the 3-ball this season, and Mark Price's final-round record and fell just one point shy of Craig Hodges' overall mark with an impressive performance leading off the last round.

Memphis' Mike Miller was eliminated from the six-man competition despite posting an 18, the highest score by a first-round loser since 1996.

The evening got off to an appropriately silly start as the All-Rookie Stars swept the Sophomores, winning three games to one. Designated as the NBA player, a POTBA player and a fellow NBA guest from the same city.

Detroit's team of Chauncey Billups, Iwo Caleb and Bill Laimbeer won when Chicago's crew was disqualified from the final round for shooting out of order.

Dwyane Wade defended his title in the Skills Challenge with a perfect final run through the obstacle course in beat Baby Bryant in 26.9 seconds. AP

THEY may have even their divisions in contrasting fashions, but there is no doubt Sandee Araullo (left) and Georgia Vilog enjoy the same winning feeling on the podium.

Phelps sinks own butterfly record

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI—Michael Phelps broke his own world record in the 200-meter butterfly in 1 minute, 53.71 seconds at the Missouri Grand Prix on Saturday.

Phelps, who won five-hundredths of a second faster than his record-setting time from August 2006 in Santa Clara, Brandjanes of Hungary by more than six seconds.

"I didn't expect that, that's for sure," he said. "Coming in tonight, I wanted to go 1:55, 1:54 the fastest. Right now, I guess things are going well."

Phelps, who earned six gold medals and two bronzes in the 2004 Olympics, plans to compete in 17 events in the world championships next month in Melbourne, Australia, during most of the events chosen to specialize in one or two events. He will race in two more events on Sunday and three on Monday. AP

Mickelson up by one

LOS ANGELES—PHIL MICKELson looked unbeatable until a 30-inch putt spun around the rim of the cup, giving him the first of three bogeys on the back nine that cost him a stadium, but ultimately not the lead in the Nissan Open on Saturday.

Mickelson got up-and-down for birdie on the par-5 17th and shot 2-under 69 in the stormy conditions at Riviera, giving him a one-shot lead over Bubba Watson (70).

Mickelson was at 12-under 200. He will be in the final group with Hennessy and Rich Beem, who delivered the theatrics by making a hole-in-one on the 14th hole that sent him leaping into the red sports car that he won for his ace.

Mark Calcavecchia, a one-time Ryder Cup teammate of Mickelson's, was 11-under 201 after a 68. Calcavecchia won the Nissan Open in 1989 and 1991. AP

Returning Vilog, Araullo rule Subic nat'l triathlon

By Jasmine W. Paya

CLARKFIELD, PAMPANGA—THE FIGHTING mom of triathlon hand Jocelin competitive drive.

Despite staying away from the sport for nearly three years, Georgia Vilog reestablished herself as the top duo after returning to the sidelines of the 30-old triathlete now wears the 2007 National Triathlon Championship crown today.

The 30-year-old racer, who had just served a suspension from the national team for disciplinary reasons, showed renewed focus by scoring a personal best of 2 hours, one minute and 55 seconds in the 51.5K meters 40K bike 10K run Olympic distance race in the Clearwater Country Club inside the Clark Special Economic Zone.

"I want to be the champion again," Vilog said in Filipino. "I stopped for almost three years. I want to come back."

The 5-foot-1 Vilog, who dominated the national championship from 2002 to 2003, broke his previous record of 2:03:52 set in 2003 in Subic.

Vilog edged 2005 Southeast Asian games bronze medalist Arlene Macasieb, who dashed in the last two loops of the run leg for a 2:02:49 finish.

"I cramped up," admitted Macasieb.

Since the event was one of those qualifying races for this year's Southeast Asian Games, Vilog came into the competition with a clear purpose.

"I was expecting to be in the top three," he said. "My target is the SEA Games. If I continue to do well in training, I think I can get the gold in the SEA Games."

While Vilog pushed himself to the limits, Gerdie Araullo excel without pressure but still came out on top in the women's division with a time of 2:10:38.

"I was just running my own race," said Araullo, who's admittedly becoming more on her nemesis maiden in physics at the University of the Philippines. "I didn't want to pressure myself, running was just a pleasant bonus."

Araullo, a 2005 SEAG silver medalist, finished nearly eight minutes ahead of fellow national team member Mimi Lucas, who clocked in at 2:18:30.

Vilog trailed Gerdie at 1:28 (mins) in the run leg before running past pace setter Macasieb in the final loop.

"During the transition (from bike to run), I decided to pace myself," said Vilog. "I reserved the power into energy) first, before pushing it (last). So I let Arlene (macasieb)."

Also coming third place honors were Mark Javier Candelaria at 2:04:29 in the men's division and Lou Gilbert Lungh at 2:36:11 in the disaffiliate.

Top junior triathletes Jonah Arenas (1:05:22) and Kim Mangonbang (1:17:07) raked the men and women's junior division.

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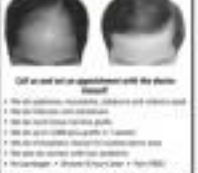

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MILO MARATHON

Canillo rules Malolos elims; Sugalan prevails

MALOLOS CITY—MICHAEL CANILLO OUTkicked Gerald Iglesia in the final kilometer to top the Bulacan leg of the 31st National Milo Marathon elimination race Sunday that started and ended at the Bulacan Sports Complex.

Canillo, a 19-year-old runner from Lemer-Sol Roxas, clocked one hour, seven minutes and 43 seconds over the 21K distance and won P10,000.

Sherwin Sugalan shared honors with Canillo by taking the women's race in 1:40:45, beating runner Mely Bay, who checked in with a time of 1:42:30 and Bienvenido Kuikuin (1:48:28).

Sugalan, 32, of Meycauayan town, Bay and Kuikuin won P5,000, P4,000 and P4,000, respectively.

Salud, younger brother of 2005 Milo Marathon champ Crisanto Salud, P10,000 for second place wrath. P6,000, while Modesto Madulang came in third (1:10:06) to take P4,000.

The top three finishers in both the men and women's races qualified in the marathon's grand finals slated Nov. 18 in Metro Manila. They will

VERY FUNNY! UNCHALLENGED: Michael Canillo shoot to kill the opposition by Milo marathon Par-Don Dog (left) and Willie Suarez of Manila.

match running skills against the other provincial top finishers for the top prize of P75,000.

Salud attributes triumph over workmate Canillo but surrendered the front to the eventual winner's on the approaches the sports complex.

"I just remain strong mentally. I was determined to win," said Canillo. Nippon pa lang, nagsabi na ako coach ang mangyayari ang finish. I'll start running for the finish right away."

Almost 5,000 runners converged the starting point lined by Mayor Cherdo Domingo, accented by Milo sports Nestle executive Par Gan Ong, race director Wally Bacaltos and Olympian Lauro Villanueva.

Gat Ong awarded the trophies to the winners.

Asiatic is the province-hopping annual host race shift to Tarlac City on Feb. 25 for the fourth leg of the 29-leg elimination run.

Repeat wins for Herrera, Manipol in Kalikasan run

HERRERA

MANIPOL

NATIONAL JOCKEY Jesus Jesse Herrera and Mercedita Manipol retained their respective titles in the eighth annual SUMAI Valley Pure Air Kalikasan 1.5K event yesterday at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

Herrera, the triumph-was gold medalist in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, finished the race in 32 minutes and three seconds.

Manipol, on the other hand, reasserted her supremacy in the 1.5K distance and preserved her 1:20-minute streak since 2003, including the Southeast Asian Games.

"Simpleng pa lang nasasabi ko na ako, siguro naghahanda na ako kaagang-1 took the lead right from the start and preserved it up to the finish line," said Herrera.

Miguel Adrian of La Salle-Dasmariñas overtook runner Bernadeth Jalao Reyes with three kilometers left to nail second place in 32:48. Dolor Reyes settled for third spot with action of 33:53.

"This is part of my preparations for the de-

finite of my 10,000 meter gold in the 36th Games," said Manipol, who clocked 37:13, in 10km.

She also topped the adidas thing of the Road 10K road race in Baguio City last week.

Aiboy Tolentino of La Salle-Dasmariñas tied in keep pace with Manipol in the first 10-kilometers along Roxas Boulevard but faded when exhaustion set in. She settled for second in 39:20, well ahead of third placer Ana Whitehouse (40:14).

The top three finishers in the 5K side event were Abraham Ramonar Jr. (27:40), Arellano Darwin (27:18) and Ben Alejandrino (27:35) in the men's race and Emma Mangaya (20:22), Mae Ann Sisenos (20:39) and Lea Nombre (21:40) in the women's race.

The 2K age-group fun run was ruled by Joshua Bonifacio and Michelle Go Ibea in the 6-9 age group and Raymond Sabarillo and Evangeline Palagan in the 10-12 category.

Proceeds of the event will go to the rehabilitation project of the La Mesa Watershed.

Talisay 6-cocker kicks off

MORE THAN 200 KIDS from playgroup into junior high in the Talisay-based Kiddie Kingdom Center in Talisay City. The most prestigious rooting event was launched by Talisay Mayor Roberto Cantos in Talisay City. The most prestigious rooting event was launched by Cebu's Governor's Trophy sponsor Thunderbird's corporate model Tommy Lagos, Robert Yu and Ricar Mercado. Representatives Power hosts and Talisay will contest a five-game round-robin tournament series and the 25-team squad 1 p.m. at the arena. Among those cheering for the championship are bowling hero Efleny Pasquin, Gerry Ramos, Chanel Sergeno and Kristi Poloy.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

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Malaysian eyes jatropha deal in RP

Joint venture with PNOC unit seen ready by midyear

By Abigail L. Ho

MALAYSIAN FIRM BIOGREEN ENERGY SDN BHD IS preparing to sign an agreement with PNOC Alternative Fuels Corp. (PNOC-AFC) on the establishment of a jatropha nursery and plantation in two different locations in the country.

In an interview with the Inquirer, Biogreen chairman Wong Chee Meng said the memorandum of understanding between his company and PNOC-AFC had already been drafted after four to six months of discussions.

The MOU should be signed sometime within this month, he said.

Should the signing push through, he said contract drafting would start by March and would take around one or two months.

Initially to be discussed would include the land that would be used for the planned seedling nurseries and jatropha plantations, enabling supply, crude oil processing for both local consumption and export, and livelihood processing, he said.

Under the MOU, he said Biogreen should be able to purchase about 50 million seedlings within two years to cover all the two locations that would be agreed upon by the two parties.

The deal is enough to supply seedlings for PNOC-AFC's planned 700,000 hectares of jatropha plantations all over the country.

"The Philippines is an important site for us. We've already conducted a feasibility study in cooperation with PNOC-AFC, and there is so much potential here. The commitment of the Philippines is there, 'cause I said, 'We're looking at China as a related business but we believe that the oil in your province will greatly help the economy.'"

He said Biogreen and PNOC-AFC should finalize their contract within the first half and start implementing it within 2007.

The establishment of a biodiesel refinery was also on the drawing board, he said, although it was not part of current negotiations between Biogreen and PNOC-AFC.

In an earlier interview, PNOC-AFC president Perry Ambrosio Alonzo said that signed in on Biogreen, among Chinese-interested in undertaking biodiesel-related projects were Korea's Samsung Corp., Japan's Sumitomo Corp. and JGC, the US' Sentrond Biofuels, Malaysia's IRDC and Brunei Oilfield Petroleum Co.

Local firms Clemente Technologies

FULL STORY B3

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As of 5 p.m. Feb. 16, 2007

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Full stock market report on Page B4

Weak trading seen

INVESTOR SENTIMENT IN THE STOCK market is expected to subdued this week as investors in Hong Kong and other Asian markets celebrate the Chinese New Year, analysts said.

The stock market is also seen getting jittery after short-selling orders is dismissed in the healthy after-market full months last week.

STORY B2

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **AGI buys stakes** in Megaworld, distiller for P20B /B4

■ **NTC seen to curb** anti-competition practices of telcos /B11

Pag-IBIG plans ₱2-B bond float

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BUDGET PROGRAM OF THE government's housing program, the Home Development Mutual Fund (more popularly known as Pag-IBIG Fund), plans to issue P2 billion-worth of five-year bonds by March.

Land Bank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines have been mandated to manage the offering, according to officials of Landbank.

"It's a re-issuance of the P2 billion bonds that matured in December," said Landbank vice president Alex Macapagal, citing investors' demand for the floating-interest UMBOS.

The Bureau of the Treasury will set the bidding date for the proposed bond float but the target will be to complete the issuance by early March, Macapagal said.

Pag-IBIG Fund was created on June 11, 1978, by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1530, later amended by RA 7742 and Republic Act No. 7742.

Under its charter, the fund's primary purpose covering multipurpose and voluntary loans. The agency has recorded a record P14.54 billion in its

FULL STORY B1

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Group pushes energy bill

By Abigail L. Ho

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP WORLDwide Fund for Nature-Philippines is urging the Senate to pass the Renewable Energy Bill, hailing its special session today and tomorrow to enable the country to take advantage of clean and indigenous energy resources.

In a statement, WWF-Philippines chief and energy policy officer Ivan Henga said the failure of the country's renewable energy sector depended on the measure, led by energy committee chair Sen. Ma'ano Defensor-Santiago, who had less more days to finish all pending tasks of the 13th Congress.

He said that if the bill would not be passed during the special session, it might take another decade for a total law bill to reach the level of the Senate.

"It took 10 years before the bill was passed in the Lower House. This special session is the perfect time to approve it and avail our country's future," Henga said. "The country needs the Renewable Energy Bill, and we cannot it now. We need to have it in place to ensure our children's future."

According to WWF-Philippines, the bill would pave the way for the greater use of energy sources that do not produce carbon dioxide emissions—the greenhouse gas believed to be the biggest cause of climate change worldwide.

What really is the bill expected to result in a cleaner Philippines, but it is also seen to boost investments in the sector due to the incentives that it will provide.

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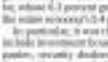

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The case for unified financial regulation

BANGKO SENTRAL GOVERNOR ARMANDO Tetangco Jr. last week signalled the openness of the BSP to setting up an integrated regulatory body that will combine the fiscal roles of the BSP, Insurance Commission (IC) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Not a true-sweet surprised by the statement, given the BSP's long-standing resistance to the very idea of such integration.

The seeming change of heart may be indicative of the recognition of the growing complexity of the financial markets, and the regulatory gaps that could occur—and have in fact occurred—as a result of such complexity.

Fast-growing

The financial services industry, composed of banks, non-banking financial institutions and insurance companies, has been growing fast by rapidly in the past couple of years.

Last year, the industry's 9% percent output growth outpaced that of the entire economy, by almost 0.3 percent growth—notably propelled by the entire economy's 7.4 percent growth.

In particular, it was the non-banks—which include investment houses, mutual fund companies, security dealers, brokers and pawnshops—that zoomed ahead with a 10.1 percent growth, while banks grew at 9.6 percent and insurance by 2.6 percent.

The healthy growth rate the industry currently enjoys stands to be incurred from the risks brought about by the sudden financial crisis almost 10 years ago.

Along with the growth comes increasing complexity in the financial products the industry offers. For example, an insurance policy now costs more than just insurance. Often, it is a savings instrument and investment.

The ups and downs of the covered industry have become well-known.

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Banks and investment houses now offer a range of simple to extremely complex financial instruments instruments beyond the usual savings and time deposits, including the ever-nasty asset-backed and mind-boggling ABTPs, and even bare types of derivatives.

It is often said that the financial industry is chosen is capable of developing a product for every conceivable need or opportunity—and make a lot of money in the process.

Vanishing lines

But is your money safe when you entrust it to these financial products?

Small savers just like high net worth individuals who invest in the intricate financial instruments often do not understand the risks and returns that come with their various saving and investment options.

The issue is crucial, especially now as we seek to channel more of the billions of dollars in OFW remittances toward investments, and billions of pesos in bank deposits could disappear the lives of millions overnight.

This is where the role of The financial regulators in protecting the welfare of the investing public is critical.

In the Philippines, we have several of them, each addressing a different segment of the financial services industry. The main ones are BSP for the banks, IC for insurance companies, SEC for corporations, and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) for cooperatives.

The challenge lies in the way the lines demarcating these various segments have now become very quickly vanishing.

Apart from financial products becoming more similar (as they combine features of saving, investment with insurance, for example), there are also widening links in ownership structures. Many of the banks have become parts of financial conglomerates that now also own insurance companies, investment houses and securities firms. Mentioned are Philippine AXA Life, Philippine Charter Ins. Metro Investment, ORIX Metro Leasing and Finance, Multi-Group Securities, and even, Bond of Philippine Islands has BPI Capital, BPI Investment Management, BPI Leasing, BPI Securities, Ipala Life Assurance Inc., PNB Insurance, and so on.

Regulatory gaps

Under this scenario and given the ever-widening array of complex financial products coming out of the industry, it certainly every day, inadequacies have arisen as to which regulatory body should take care of new products as they come out.

The case in point is pre-need, which had long been suspected by SEC, whereas many in fact it is an insurance product and should have been under the IC all along.

There have been times when certain financial products had gone unregulated for extended periods—thereby subjecting their investors to particular—because some of the regulators claimed that were under their jurisdiction.

The Financial Sector Forum (FSF) was established to partly address the problem, via better coordination among the financial regulators. It cannot, unfortunately, however, resolve inherently murky such regulatory gaps when they arise—as they will continue to arise.

A more lasting solution via an integrated and comprehensive financial regulatory system is clearly needed, even overdue.

Governor Tetangco's recent statement appears to signal government's intention to move more deliberately in this direction.

This is a welcome development in the interest of public welfare, especially in an economy whose likelihood industry has lately become a key growth driver.

Eagle Watch

The next Alvarez Eagle Watch Economic and Political Briefing will be on Wednesday morning, Feb. 21 at the Alvarez Boulevard Complex.

For details and reservations, please contact Jeanvale Tongol at 920-7910 (e-mail jeanvale@gmail.com).

I apologize for giving an erroneous e-mail address earlier (jeanvale.tongol@gmail.com). Those who may have attempted to communicate via that address could do so again using the correct one.

Comments are welcome at chabito@abscbn.ph.

Weak . . .

From page B1

to 1.0 years, analysts added.

"The broad base for slightly down but it's a healthy correction, by the local market, even if foreign investors are cold to risks, local investors may try to do some window dressing," said Joseph Bersa, president of Eagle Equities Inc.

Analysts also welcome foreign investors to come down very soon and this would lead to dramatic rebounds.

Bersa reported that most Asian markets, including Hong Kong and South Korea, will rebound early next week, while China and Taiwan will be closed all week to celebrate the Year of the Pig. There will be no trading on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stocks for the Festival of Spring.

Jesus del Castillo, managing director at First Grade Holdings, said the market was expected to enter upside gains last week since "technical, 'p' prices have gone up to "overbought" levels.

"The index could hover around 3,300 to 3,400. But it will not before 2007 to 3,500 again. Positive economic news, specially earnings results of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), could awaken the bulls," Del Castillo said. Khaitlin S.L. Sanchez

Gov't lists options to cut NFA deficit

By Doris C. Dumlao

TRICCIAN STRAPPED TERTIONAL Food Authority can come as much as P8 billion by selling unrecognized bank currently used as collateral for its debts in order to support a much-needed debt-reduction program, legislators Secretary Arthur Yap said.

In a recent roundtable discussion with the Business Mirror, Yap said the government can borrow as much as P8 billion to finance the NFA's deficit, particularly by unlocking cash reserves from various assets such as liquidating its holdings of Smart, selling a third of its 300 non-performing assets and even making the sale of the 1.26-hectare Food Terminal Inc. property to Ayala Corp.

Some economists have long urged the government to sell the NFA's cash-rice subsidy program. In one draft, for instance, the World Bank said the government policy of buying high-cost palay (rice) at a premium effectively made the price affordable should be reviewed and, paying such a policy is not sustainable.

But Yap said it was not an option to shut down the NFA despite its financial deficit for the public service as this would mean robbing the masses but this country's poor right to workers.

He explained, however, that there were ways to reduce the NFA's deficit, such as by accepting some foodstuffs now currently used as collateral for the debts.

"A program I mooted in NFA a two years ago was to pull all of our down-rice debts from long-term ... We are not under our credit lines to buy Philippines debt paper and used these debt papers to get financing," Yap said.

"So today if we discount them and economics all of those securities, I understand we would save P4-P5 billion, which can could we redirecting some lines," Yap said.

Yap's ago refuse the national government envisaged on giving sovereign guarantees in government-owned and -controlled corporations to borrow coated to sovereign subsidies, the NFA reserved to collateralized debt financing facilities to ease money.

Under such reforms, the borrower gets a loan in excess of what it needs and uses the additional to buy non-collapse bonds

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AGI buys stakes in Megaworld, distiller for ₱20B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ALLIANCE GLOBAL GROUP INC. (AGI; YEH) Filipino-owned holding firm that owns a chicken Stock in the local McDonald's franchise, is acquiring shares in brandy maker Emperador Distillers Inc. (EDI) and property giant Megaworld Corp. for roughly P20 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, AGI said the acquisitions would pave the way for the consolidation of businesses held by businessman Andrew Tan in various industries under AGI or the holding company.

Tan chairs both Megaworld and AGI and is the owner of Emperador Distillers.

AGI will buy all of EDI's common shares for P2 billion in cash, making the distiller a wholly-owned subsidiary of the...

AGI will also acquire 5.25 billion shares of Megaworld or roughly 25 percent of the company's outstanding equity, for about P17 billion. AGI, through its wholly owned subsidiary Newtown Land Partners, owns 23 percent of Megaworld. The new acquisition will increase AGI's consolidated equity investment in Megaworld to 46 percent.

"AGI will bring together all our investments in real estate, food and beverage and the casino service/entertainment industry. The company will serve as a primary vehicle to expand these businesses and look into various opportunities for growth," Tan said in a statement.

In a new conglomerate, Tan said AGI would embark on aggressive property development through Megaworld, a leader in the property market's two fastest-growing segments: Mid-income housing and business process outsourcing office. Megaworld expects to generate a net income of P3.46 billion in 2007.

AGI's food and beverage business, on the other hand, will be expanded through EDI. EDI manufactures Emperador brands touted as the largest-selling brandy in the world.

Meanwhile, AGI's quick service restaurant operations will be boosted by McDonald's, which expects to double its current restaurant outlets to 500 over the next five years.

"AGI has entered a strong momentum for growth with the dominant position of Megaworld and EDI in their respective industries and McDonald's reputation as a strong global brand. AGI is also looking into new areas where growth is sustainable," Tan said.

₱1B/yr needed for coco industry rehab

By Russel K. Dumlao

THE COCONUT INDUSTRY is likely poised to raise P1 billion a year for the rehabilitation of farmlands ravaged by a series of strong typhoons that hit the country in 2006 and help raise coconut production at least to normal levels.

According to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, a significant number of trees had to be replaced soon before the typhoons came, most of which were 60 years and older.

Data from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) show that P714.6 million worth of coconut trees were damaged by Typhoon Reming that ravaged southern Luzon in late November last year, affecting some 296,000 hectares.

"[If Oil Mil-] group has been identified to spearhead rehabilitation efforts but there has been difficulty in securing money," Yap said.

The CIIF-MC comprises six coconut oil-milling companies headed by the countervailing coconut levy or the Coconut Industry Investment Fund.

"This is a very serious situation considering that the Philippines has remained the world's top exporter despite the declining state of our coconut farmlands," the agriculture chief added.

More forex liberalization measures readied

Cap on noncommercial dollar purchases to be raised to $15,000

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS plans to raise the limit on foreign exchange that clients can buy from banks for noncommercial purposes, including remittances from Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), to $15,000 from the current cap of $5,000 per transaction.

The forex part of the foreign exchange liberalization package mulled by the policy-making Monetary Board, BSP sources said.

The package also includes a substantial increase in the cap on banks' allowable dollar stockpiling—or overbought positions, or 20 percent of unimpaired capital from the current 15 percent. This, however, still have to be matched by a corresponding 20-percent limit on net unwanted positions.

The sources said these proposals were discussed by the Monetary Board during a recent informal meeting. Some board members, however, were not convinced of the merits of the proposals.

"We'll bring them back to the informal table meeting for further study," an official said.

The Monetary Board holds the informal meetings also known as 320 meetings, named after the number of the room where the sessions are being held every Monday ahead of the policy-making Thursday meetings. These informal meetings are being held for BSP members to deliberate on policies before the items are officially put to the Thursday meeting agenda.

Other sources said the while these limits were proposed by the BSP's research department, the figures were "not set final" because they would first have to be justified to the MB.

In waiving the documentation requirements for a greater amount of nonbank transactions, the BSP is continuing the foreign exchange liberalization that was started in the 1990s but was disrupted in 1997 during the Asian currency turmoil.

"It's a good move because without you go abroad, $5,000 is too little," a banker said.

At present, dollar purchases for trade purposes are subjected to various documentation requirements, such as submission of two copies of supporting documents, commercial invoices, shipping documents and notarized application to purchase foreign exchange.

In the meantime, the 20-20 percent overbought/oversold formula discussed by the BSP is in line with the prevailing foreign exchange limits in most countries in Asia.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. earlier said the package prepared by the BSP would include liberalization of certain items in the current account and capital account transactions, such as forex transactions for trade in services and travel and the $6-million dollar cap on outward foreign investments by residents.

The current and capital accounts are key components of the balance of payments or BOP which in turn measures the total foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

The current account records the trade in goods and services as well as cash transfers, such as from migrant workers while the capital account includes flows related to investments in business, real estate, bonds and stocks.

Bankers are also hoping that the BSP would again allow banks to operate foreign exchange trading subsidiaries, which was banned in previous years to prevent speculative attacks against the local currency.

In recent years, the Thailand's current move to curb capital inflows, the Philippines is set to liberalize restrictions on capital outflows to hedge against the heavy inflow of foreign money from overseas Filipino workers and foreign portfolio investors.

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We support your vision for the EDSA MRT, Madame President

We are enjoying today the benefits of modern and efficient mass rail transit along EDSA.

BUT GOOD CAN BE BETTER.

We, therefore, call for the immediate implementation of your plans for the expansion of EDSA MRT.

10 years ago, **EDSA PARA SA MASA** prayed among the erstwhile critics of what was just then a planned mass transit system along EDSA.

We were right: an EDSA MRT would help us get to the country's important business districts faster and easier; would help reduce pollution; and would free us, EDSA's commuters, from the tyranny of an antiquated transportation system.

Today, it takes us only **30 minutes** to traverse a 17-kilometer distance that took us close to two hours before the advent of EDSA MRT.

Today, we enjoy an air-conditioned transportation means that charges us lower fare than when it began its service – a total irony in Philippine transport history.

BUT WE FEAR THE EDSA MRT SYSTEM MAY NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE HUGE GROWTH OF PATRONAGE.

WHAT IS GOOD TODAY CAN BE BETTER TOMORROW.

Our commuter ranks have swelled from just over 100,000 EDSA MRT passengers per day, when the system began, to close to half a million a day riders today.

Our fellow commuters from the North still have to suffer conventional transport means to connect to the north end of the system.

MADAME PRESIDENT:

The number of EDSA MRT train coaches has remained the same;

The distance serviced by the EDSA MRT System has remained the same.

We, therefore, ask you to put the expansion of the EDSA MRT as your priority project 1-st and implement your vision for the EDSA MRT so we, the commuters of EDSA may look forward to the continuing efficiency of a dependable light rail transit system:

1. Additional trains and coaches to ease the current passenger congestion;
2. The northward expansion of the line to benefit our fellow commuters from northern Metro Manila and the northern parts of Luzon.

We ask you to implement your vision sooner before the din of politics overshadow the aspiration of the commuters of EDSA.

EDSA PARA SA MASA MOVEMENT

A CIVIC ORGANIZATION HAS CALLED FOR the expansion and extension of the light rail transit system along Edsa in view of its unprecedented rider patronage and to enable the system to attain maximum efficiency.

The Edsa Para sa Masa said the Metro Rail Transit 3 might have already used up its full capacity. The group claims that the current daily ridership of MRT 3 has reached close to half a million passengers.

Data obtained from the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), however, showed that the current average daily ridership was already 400,000 on weekdays and 298,000 on weekends.

The group said it "recognizes the valuable role the Edsa MRT plays in the lives of daily commuters."

The system services the route through 13 stations and connects North Triangle in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Manila passing through the Makati central business district.

The group wanted that the system might not cope with the huge growth in patronage if it would not be expanded and extended as soon as possible.

The group claims it opposed segmental efforts to stop the construction of the Edsa system some 10 years ago.

"We proved the erstwhile critics of the system wrong," the group said. "We were right! An Edsa MRT would help us get to the country's important business districts faster and easier; would help reduce pollution; and would free us, Edsa's commuters, from the tyranny of an antiquated transportation system," it added in a statement.

The group said it was concerned that the delay in the expansion and extension of the system might lead to a diminution of the high quality of commuter service provided by the current mode.

The group specifically called for the addition of more trains and the construction of a northward extension of plans to extend the North Triangle end of the system all the way to Bocaue.

Pag-IBIG ... Previous page B1

more-than-six million members nationwide as of end-2006. This was an increase of 6 percent from the previous year's release of P27.13 billion. The two likewise saw more housing loans approved for individual housing borrowers at P71.29 billion.

Over the last few years, the fund has streamlined its operations and provided its members simplified business processes. Among the measures it carried out were the reduction of documentary requirements on loans and lending services, reduction of standard time for processing members' loans, claims and in responding to members' concerns, opening up five Pag-IBIG-for-business transactions and a smart queuing system (Q-servicing) especially during peak periods, putting in place a "No lunch break" treatment service, and pioneering a system for electronic remittance generating and linking with private and public banks for the use of their electronic payment facilities.

Under the law, the Pag-IBIG Fund is required to set aside an amount equivalent to not less than 70 percent of its annual net income and declare this as dividends, later credited proportionately to the members' total savings.

P1B/yr needed ...

From page B1

According to CEPD/NEC, there are some 3.1 million hectares nationwide that are classified as erosion lands/soils, of which 15 percent or 450,000 hectares need to be rehabilitated.

These account for land with more-or-old to bear fruit, and areas that had been declared for coconut farming but are idle.

Aside from that, 750,000 hectares need to be fertilized in the land lacked nutrients to support coconut bearing trees.

"We need some two bibs of fertilizers per tree to help increase production, but there is just no funds readily available for this," Tiqui said.

In a report made available last December, PCA said 42.64 million coconut trees were damaged, and four out of five are in the Visayas region. Damaged trees in Bicol represent about a tenth of the country's 326 million coconut bearing trees.

PCA says firms can meet fuel blend demand

By Clovisbert A. Saphon

LEGAL PROBLEMS OF COCONUT-BASED BIODIESEL PRODUCTS can meet the expected demand for fuel blends once the Biofuels Act of 2006 goes into full swing in the second quarter of the year, a ranking official of the Philippine Coconut Authority said.

To ease concerns that domestic coconut oil production may not be enough to meet the country's biodiesel requirements, PCA deputy administrator Lucita Cuipo said that local producers have the capacity to produce more than the estimated 70 million liters of coconut oil required for the 1 percent fuel blend.

The PCA, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, for one completed its assessment on the capacity of producers to supply the required fuel requirements.

At present, the combined capacity of the seven main manufacturers is placed at 208 million liters.

Cuipo said that would be enough to fulfill the country's biodiesel requirements.

According to the PCA official, Clemens Inc. has the capacity to produce 70 million liters; Global Pure Chemical Inc., 36 million liters; Bonanza Philippines, 360,000 liters; Lou Chemical Corp., 6 million liters; PE Refil Corp., 6 million liters; Pure Essence, 60 million liters; Green Core Inc., 20 million liters.

Cuipo said that some of the companies were even keen to export their products to Japan.

Petr, the Biofuels Act, the country may no longer have to rely on foreign oil as much. The law also provides government efforts to tap renewable sources of energy.

Three months after the law takes effect, vehicles that run on diesel will be required to use fuel products with a one percent blend.

The mandated blend will rise to 2 percent after two years.

The PCA admits that, in the long term, the production of coconut oil may be strained to its limit.

Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Orlando Castro said some P4.5 billion in investment are needed to fortify existing coconut farms.

Castro said that about 200,000 hectares of coconut plantations had been severely damaged by a series of strong typhoons that pummeled the country during the last four months of 2006.

He said it would take the country's coconut farmers another two to three years before they could bring production back to its normal level of no less than 2.2 million metric tons a year.

Typhoon damage also reduced copra output in 2006 by an total 10 percent to 980,000 tons—the lowest since a severe drought hit the country in 1998, the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines (Unaco) said in a report.

Copra is the dried coconut meat from which the oil is extracted.

Customs seeks higher reward for its workers

By Michelle F. Reyes

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS IS CLAMORING FOR a higher reward for its employees after the agency contributed to the unit collection more than it was required to in 2006.

The BOC's cash collection last year, in the form of taxes and duties on imported goods, reached P192.2 billion. This was 92.2 billion higher than the official cash collection target of P100 billion assigned to the agency.

Under the Lateral Attrition law, which took effect last last year, the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue shall be entitled to a monetary reward should they exceed their full-year collection target. The BOC and BIR personnel who better enact their goals will be subject to penalty, either demotion, reassignment or dismissal.

According to Customs deputy commissioner Ric Umali, the reward to be distributed among employees has a minimum amount equivalent to 15 percent of the current collection. But if the excess collection is more than 30 percent of the goal, then the reward should be equivalent to 20 percent of that excess collection.

He said the Revenue Performance Evaluation Board (RPEB), which determines the guidelines on the implementation of the Lateral Attrition law, currently looks at granting incentive amounting to 15 percent of the P2.2 billion total excess collection. This is equivalent to P320 million to be distributed to customs BOC employees.

But Umali said the BOC's excess collection should actually be higher, or P7.5 billion, if the target was adjusted to a realistic figure.

The P2.2 billion in excess collection was based on the target of P100 billion. Umali said, however, that the realistic target should be P194.7 billion.

He explained that the official cash collection target of P100 billion was based on certain macroeconomic assumptions that were not met.

For instance, the peso was assumed to settle at an average of 52 to 54 but (rise when the target was set. But the peso strengthened to appreciate, at least last year, from the 54 to a dollar mark and hovering in the 49 level toward the end of the year.

Imported goods are valued in dollars. An appreciation of the peso, therefore, makes imports

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Landbank plans to borrow $531M in ODAs

ADB, Japan bank and nontraditional sources to be tapped

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NOTICE AND AGENDA OF THE MEETING

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NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

NOTICE is hereby given that the Special Meeting of Stockholders of **ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES, INC.**, will be held on February 27, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Aboitiz Visual Room of the Aboitiz Corporate Center, Gov. Manuel Cuenco Avenue, Kasambagan, Cebu City.

The Agenda of the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Proof of Notice of Meeting
3. Determination of Quorum
4. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Stockholders' Meeting of May 16, 2006
5. Presentation on the planned initial public offering of Aboitiz Power Corporation (APC)
6. Approval and Ratification of the proposed transfer of AEV's investments in power companies to APC
7. Other Business
8. Adjournment

Only stockholders of record at the close of business on January 31, 2007 are entitled to notice and to vote at the meeting. Registration will start at 2:00 p.m. and will end at 4:00 p.m. Kindly present any proof of identification, such as driver's license, passport, company I.D. or SSS/GSIS I.D. Aside from personal identification, representatives of corporate stockholders and other entities should also present a duly sworn Secretary's Certificate or a similar document showing his or her authority to represent the corporation or entity.

Should you be unable to attend the meeting, you may want to execute a proxy in favor of a representative. In accordance with the amended By-Laws of the Corporation, proxies must be presented to the Secretary for inspection, validation and record at least seven (7) days prior to the opening of the stockholders' meeting. We enclose a proxy form for your convenience.

For the Board of Directors,

(sgd) Ma. JASMINE S. OPORTO
Corporate Secretary

By Doris C. Dumlao

GOVERNMENT-OWNED LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES plans to tap $531 million worth of official development assistance from global donors to expand its source of funding this year and in 2008, bank officials said.

With local interest rates falling to historic lows, Landbank president Gilda Ileto said the bank would also build up its domestic deposit base to lower its cost of funds.

To secure ODAs, Ileto said borrowers like Landbank were required to set aside 4 percent of the proceeds of the loan for foreign exchange cover. This is in addition to the 1 percent it pays to guarantee fees to the national government.

"This cost, equivalent to 5 percent of the loan, is heavy, considering that you still have to pay the interest," Ileto said.

Despite this, she said, Landbank had planned to raise much of its loan ODA funds with maturities of 20-30 years. These ODAs, she added, were matched with various development projects.

Luzila Tenorio, Landbank assistant vice president in Landbank, said the following three projects were lined up for funding by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation: $136 million for agriculture enterprise development; $136 million for support to social, energy and environment projects, and $133 million for the local government unit credit enhancement program.

The first is already in the advanced stage of negotiations and has been endorsed by the national government for inclusion in the 17th jus (sic) package. This JBIC loan will mature in (sic) 30 years.

"We are also working with the Asian Development Bank for a multi-support for water, energy and environment-related projects worth $150 million," she said.

Also in the pipeline is a 7 million-euro community development fund (CDF) assistance project with German development lender KfW.

Ileto is being assisted out with BPW in a 15-million-euro (GE) investment program which is expected to be closed within the year.

"We have signed last year a 150-million-euro GE investment program with BPW and this is fully committed," Tenorio said.

The BPW loans will carry a maturity of up to 40 years.

However said Landbank had Mayaju started talking with non-traditional sources of ODA funds such as the China Export Import Bank.

China Eximbank, which is financing the controversial North Railway project, has committed to point into the country at least $2 to ODA yearly in the next three to five years.

About 60 percent of Landbank's loan portfolio is now devoted to private sectors, jumping from only 36 percent in 2006. These private sectors included farmers and fisherfolk, microenterprises and small and medium enterprises, livelihood loans, agribusiness, agri-infrastructure, agri-extension projects of government-owned and -controlled corporations and environment-related projects.

In 2006, the bank contributed 727.3 billion to the government's program aiming to divide lending to cooperatives, community-based institutions, small and medium enterprises and Countrywide.

"Through our financing support for diversified agricultural projects particularly those related to agri-processing, agri-infrastructure, farming and agricultural production, we are helping the government strengthen the country's export growth and in augmenting employment and generating job-employment," Ileto said.

Of the total amount released, the Lanes Usan February got the biggest share at 44.7 percent or P14.7 billion, followed by the Agri-business industries at P9.3 billion, Central Philippines got P6.7 billion and the Southern Philippines Davao Region exceed P4.4 billion.

In terms of project type, agricultural production accounted for the bulk of the loans or P21.9 billion, followed by agri-processing with P10.6 billion. Other projects financed were agri-services—including water, construction, solid waste management and farming.

Pulse Asia up to its old tricks

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Monsodo C. General

FROM NOW TILL THE MAY 14 ELECTIONS, the Filipino people will be virtually swamped with political opinion surveys from Pulse Asia, found Ateneo Station. Boni Foundation and some other survey houses firms that would out of the woodwork during campaign time.

Pulse Asia was ahead of the pack. If the elections had been held last Feb. 8, 16, reported in a press release, "Li Presumablers... 7 of whom are officially part of the United Opposition's senatorial slate, 6 enjoy at least (and rank) the administration's slate, 11 still run as an independent opposition candidate—would have a statistical chance of winning a senatorial seat."

Or worst so: "Loren Legarda continues to lead the list of probable winners..." In the very near tomorrow, 08, were all the way, "Three individuals may be considered as non-winners if elections were held today given that their current statistical rankings range from 1st to 11th (Jinggoy—clearly within the winning circle of 12 seats)."

In the next paragraph, "statistical chances" turned into "probable winners" and finally non-unemployed into "non-winners." That is what I call black magic.

And what are the statistics PA brags about? 38 calls, 1,5 1,200 respondents. In the very near tomorrow, 08, were all the way, "Those

Seaweed sector sees 20% sales growth

By Christine A. Caylao

THE PHILIPPINE SEAWEED INDUSTRY EXpects a 20-percent increase to some $1bi next to almost $166 million in the global market with the wider usage for the agriculture-based product for food and various kill manufacturing applications, secretary-official said.

Cebu-based firms exporting processed and semi-processed seaweeds that produce the by-product carrageenan will continue to increase gross sales, which last year rose to $165 million from $138 million the year before, Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines (SIAP) president Renato Uday said in an interview.

"Carrageenan's extensive use as a safe food additive and pharmaceutical and hygiene product" has created continuous increase in sales for the industry," said Uday, who owns Shenzheng Manufacturing Corp.

Carrageenan has been used worldwide as food additive for bain processing and dairy products, manufacturing and as an industrial product ingredient for pharmaceutical soft gel medicine coating and for hygiene products' base for toothpaste, he noted.

Growing demand from abroad, however, could not be met by local seaweed farms in the last two years, Uday said this since 2000, the industry has chosen to acquire raw seaweeds from other Southeast Asian countries to meet its requirements, which this year set estimated at 100,000 metric tons.

He said that the $300-million industry is reeling from the insufficient supply of seaweeds as farms in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu have not fully recovered since the typhoons devastated their farms in the early 2000s.

"Seaweed farmers can't farmers access to it, meeting to continue and rehabilitate their farms and for more farmers to take up seaweed farming," he said.

The insufficient supply has jacked up the price of local raw high-grade seaweed to P10-P42 a kilo. Local processors have resorted importing from Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and as far as Chile at P50a kilo.

However, industry players only see these issues as minor compromise and Philippine-made seaweeds still monitor 70 percent of the end-product due to high grade quality.

But like other exporters, the rising/beating of the peso means fewer profits even as they strive with higher production costs and unsufficient supply of raw materials.

Supplying more than 70 percent of the global demand, the Philippines is the world's top exporter of carrageenan to the United States and Europe.

Malaysian ...

From page B1

Inc., Limberlad Manufacturing Co., Interbar (composed of now oil players Pacific United Petroleum Philippines Inc., Sound Philippines Inc. and Eastern Petroleum Corp.), Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Corp. are also considering biodiesel projects.

He said National Biofuels was looking at 200,000 metric ton (MT) willow/ha, 8/32, two refineries, 30-million-liter, one 100,000-MT plant, and 100,000-MT plant.

Limberlad, an ethyl ethanol producer, was actually considering giving up its current business to draft to produce biodiesel, Jesus Jumapao, he said.

PHOC-AIC had already signed a memorandum of understanding with Samsung for an P8.2-billion petrophenylkaolinton and refinery project. It also disclosed that Samsung had agreed to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a biofuels central to refine in Subic.

Gov't ...

From page B1

as a collateral for the principal debt.

Over time, the value of such collateral has gotten its share of interest in fattened times to enforce capital appreciation.

"The return [over coupon bonds] are lengthy before, if we register now and use it for refinancing, that's additional money to either invest or buy back the bonds to reduce our short-term debts into long-term," Yap said.

In part of the $30b dollar-reduction program, Yap said some of the warehouses have semi-commercial lease-contract potential.

"What we have here, also, is not only to look at our distribution as for retail bonds. We could do that, we should create a situation [of diversification] and private sectors and there are cost-to-market linkage," Yap said.

"So I want to test the domestic and investment market, create markets and then pump more money for production support," he said.

Other ways to reduce the $30b debt would be to rationalize its workforce and diversify its income stream, Tuyuyed.

"The means not just making spending a temporary thing distribution to the market," Yap said.

On FDI, he said the short size of the complex issue, making it difficult for the government to unlock values from this assets.

"There's a lot of long-term issues and this is a distinctive issue there's a buyer who can invest there for the long term. And that's what we're looking for an institutional player who can come in, one who can afford to wait, one who can leverage its cash flow, who knows how to carry the investment's long-term advantage," Yap said.

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Tighter rules on issuance of receipts sought

Compromise deal should cover only first-time offenders–NTRC

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE is urged to increase the penalty on businesses that do not issue receipts, as this problem was found to be a major source of tax leakage.

The National Tax Research Center (NTRC), an attached agency of the Department of Finance tasked to conduct studies and provide recommendations on tax-related matters, said existing penalties slapped on delinquent businesses were not enough to discourage tax evasion through non-issuance of receipts.

Under the National Internal Revenue Code, owners of businesses that do not issue receipts face imprisonment of two-to-four years and are required to pay certain fines. They are, however, allowed to enter into a compromise deal with the BIR.

Under Revenue Memorandum Order 30-2000, a business proved not issuing receipts may enter into a compromise deal that requires the payment of P1,000 to P20,000 in fine for the first offense. Second-time offenders may pay a penalty ranging from P5,000 to P50,000.

"There may be a need to review the compromise penalty provided under RMO No. 30-2000 for possible upgrading in order to strengthen its punitive effects," the NTRC said in a study on the problem of rampant non-issuance of receipts.

Also, the NTRC said, the application of the compromise penalty should be limited to one-or-only-first-time offenders.

It explained that existing rules were too lax and that they did not help in addressing the said problem.

BIR officials earlier said that about 90 percent of the establishments surveyed by its tax mapping operations were found to have tax violations, one of the most common being the non-issuance of receipts.

Under the tax mapping operations, tax agents visit business establishments to check the level of their tax compliance.

The BIR was tasked last year to collect P671.4 billion, but actual collection reached only P611.4 billion.

Tax evasion and corruption were often cited as among the reasons for the shortfall in collections. The others being the declining interest rates, and the lower than-expected inflation rate and economic growth.

In the interviews conducted by the NTRC, certain businesses had admitted they were not systematically issuing receipts to clients and that they issued receipts only when customers ask of them.

"The reason given for the non-issuance of receipts was to save on costs of printing and supplies," the NTRC said.

While not admitted by the interviewees, the main intent for not issuing receipts is to avoid having records of sales or income from services rendered, which are the basis in the computations of their tax liabilities," the NTRC said.

The bedding of tax mapping operations was among the measures adopted by the revenue agency to plug leakages in tax collection. Also, the BIR is now computing regularly with third-party sources, particularly owners of businesses, to determine the accuracy of the income declared by corporate taxpayers.

The revenue agency has likewise adopted the benchmarking system in its auditing operation.

Under this system, the BIR runs out a benchmark on income of businesses belonging to an industry. Tighter auditing is made on those who will declare incomes substantially lower than the benchmark levels.

The BIR's large taxpayers unit is set to intensify the use of the benchmarking method to determine the accuracy of the tax declarations submitted by more than 1,000 companies belonging to the large taxpayers group.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is welcomed upon her arrival at the Hotel Intercon in Makati City for the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) inaugural meeting and induction of officers for 2007. The inductees are (silhouette) (from left) Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., honorary chair; Miguel Varela, chair emeritus; Santos Lim, PCCI president, and Donald Ong, chair. At his inaugural speech, Lim announced the creation of the council of advisers, the first time in the history of the PCCI, which is composed of the top 22 most successful and powerful business leaders in the country.

ALI-FBDC venture earmarks P10B for projects catering to BPO firms

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ASIA LAND DEV. CORP. THROUGH ITS joint venture ALI Property Partners Corp. (APPCO), a consortium P10 billion in the next three years for large-scale projects that are aimed at meeting the rising demand for office spaces catering to business process outsourcing (BPO) firms, company officials told the business.

In an interview, APPCO president Blanche Adamares said about P4 billion would go to Dela Rosa 8-Stories Building, the maiden project of APPCO in Makati and P6 billion to the University of the Philippines-North Science and Technology Park in Quezon City.

APPCO is a joint venture between ALI, which owns 36 percent of the company, and investment firm Goldman Sachs' IBGT Investments Ltd. and Cagamas's Philippine Investments Ltd., each controlling 32 percent.

The Dela Rosa 8-Stories Building will have 24 storys, each with a floor plate of around 11,500 square meters. It will have more than 60,000 square meters of gross leasable area.

It will consist of two towers, the first of which will be completed by the end of 2008.

In the meantime, the 10-hectare UP North Avenue and Technology Park will feature 10 low-rise office buildings to be complemented by retail, residential and hotel components. The first two buildings will break ground in March this year to be completed by the end of the year.

ALI president Jaime Ayala earlier said the science and technology park would expand UP's commitment to education, training and research excellence by creating an environment where high-technology enterprises can interact with the academe in research and development.

Aside from the UP-D park, ALI is also set to launch this year its 20-hectare Cordoba-Arup BPO Campus, a campus type sprawling development with low-rise IT buildings supported by retail, commercial, residential and recreational developments.

The 600 campus is seen to conform the development of ALI's 3,700-hectare landbank in Cordoba as a regional growth center.

With the government confident the country would be able to capture 1.8 million of the $500-billion global BPO market by 2010, APPCO is also positive that it could deliver 900,000 square meters of new BPO spaces in three years.

ALI offers BPO office buildings in Metro Manila through PeopleSupport Center and Cornerspace, both in Makati; InfoNOE in Laguna and the HSBC building in Bel-Air/Salcedo. The HSBC office space, which will be completed this year, is owned by Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. but will be managed by ALI.

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Approval of affordable medicine bill sought

SEVERAL NONGOVERNMENT organizations are calling for the speedy passage of the bill on affordable medicine during the two-day special session of Congress which starts today.

In a statement, these groups—led by the Ayos na Gamot sa Abot Kayang Presyo (Agap) coalition and the Cut-the-Cost, Cut-the-Pain Network (TNCPNet)—said the passage of House Bill No. 5055 "will finally end the regime of high medicine costs which has deprived millions of sick Filipinos access to treatment."

The groups said the lack of access to affordable medicine "has aggravated the poor health conditions of a significant portion of the country's underprivileged groups."

HB 5055, authored by Rep. Jesse Ong, chair of the Congress committee of trade and industry, allows the parallel importation of cheaper patented medicines and the early development and manufacturing of the generic versions of the more expensive branded medicines.

It also authorizes pertinent government agencies to issue compulsory licenses to generic firms when warranted by public health emergency situations.

The bill was enrolled by President Macapagal-Arroyo as a priority measure. The Senate version was passed in January this year.

GSIS eCard enrollment starts

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE System has started enrolling members in the eCard Plus following the setting up of its enrollment centers in its central office in Pasay City, the GSIS field offices and other government establishments in Metro Manila and the provinces of Bicol, Bohol and Cebu.

By March 1, the GSIS will set up enrollment centers in all GSIS field offices and other select government establishments nationwide.

GSIS members were advised to get in touch with their personnel officers on the enrollment schedule of their agencies to avoid work disruptions. The GSIS has made arrangements with government agencies on their predicted enrollment schedule to ensure their continued operations while their employees are enrolling.

Products watchdog destroys 47,000 bars of substandard steel

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY's Bureau of Product Standards supervised a had destroyed 47,000 pieces of substandard steel bars in a bid to address the continued proliferation of unsafe goods.

BPS director Josue L. Benosmanil said the products were seized from Steelbase Steel in Meycauayan City, its Pandacan depot during an operation of the BPS enforcement team.

Benosmanil said Steelbase had been charged with an administrative case for the illegal distribution and sale of substandard products.

He said such activities were in violation of Republic Act 4109 or the Philippine Standards Act as well as Section 6 of Department Administrative Order 2 Series of 2002.

Steelbase was fined P17,500, while its owners took an oath of undertaking to comply the firm's strict compliance with the requirements of the Philippine National Standards and other related trade laws.

Trade Secretary Peter K. Favila said the seized bars were cut into numerous metal discs to ensure that those would not be sold back to consumers.

"Substandard goods, especially construction materials such as steel bars, pose tremendous risk to the public's safety and should have no place in the market," Favila said. "Being a major component in constructing houses, offices, schools and other infrastructures, steel bars are critical to the life, health and safety of the consuming public."

He said the Department of Trade and Industry would continue to unveil anti-illegal practices in the steel bar industry to protect businesses and ensure the consumers' welfare by certifying only safe and reliable products.

According to Benosmanil, the confiscated products were made up of 16-kilo and 10-kilo steel bars, which did not bear the required markings based on the PNS on steel bars.

"The products have an indication of the bar size and manufacturer's logo, which signifies that these did not undergo the manufacturer tests and inspections set by DTI," he explained.

The department had previously reported that a total P68 million worth of various products that did not undergo the government's quality tests before distribution in the market were seized in 2006.

Of that amount, about three hundred or P46.39 million, represented at least 300,000 pieces of uncertified and substandard steel bars from 14 establishments last year.

Aside from steel bars, last year's haul included liquefied petroleum gas cylinders, wiring devices, wires and cables, electrical tapes, unsigned fluorescent lamps, plywood, sanitary wares, flat glass, auto batteries, brake fluid, fire extinguishers, monobloc chairs and Christmas lights.

CIIF's San Miguel dividends may fund gov't coco effort, says DA

TSP

P1-B fund to be released after elections

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY may turn say the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) group's dividend earnings from its stake in beverage giant San Miguel Corp. to finance the government program to increase the country's coconut production by at least 26 percent to 1,01,000 metric tons (mt) this year.

The dividends are estimated to reach P1.9 billion. The Department of Agriculture hopes to set aside that amount for the PCA program.

The CIIF group of companies holds a block of outstanding shares in San Miguel equivalent to 23 percent, according to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap.

He told the Inquirer Business staff that the CIIF group would finance the needed coconut tradition program for some 700,000 hectares of coconut farms nationwide.

"We have been given the approval, through the assistance of the Office of the Solicitor General, to access the funds from the CIIF Group," Yap said during the interview.

And to prevent misuse of the fund in light of the coming local elections, the DA chief said that the money would be released after May, in time for the coconut planting season that starts in June.

"There would be strict monitoring of the funds," Yap said. "According to the Supreme Court, it is the CIIF that will administer and monitor the release of the funds."

According to PCA Administrator Oscar Garcia, the coconut industry badly needs the fund to arrest declining production in the country's coconut industry.

He estimated that, to produce at least 1 million metric tons of coconut oil by 2010, some P4.3 billion in financing will be required to fertilize 1.2 million hectares of coconut farms around the country.

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NTC seen to curb anticompetition practices of telcos

By Bea T. Cupin

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) is set to issue rules designed to curb anti-competition practices among local telcos, the regulator said during the e-Services Philippines 2007 conference and exhibition.

In an NTC presentation, the regulator is considering a number of ways to curb unfair practices in the telecommunications industry, such as predatory pricing and limiting access of smaller carriers to the backbone networks of dominant players.

The commission has said, time and again, that these practices are observed in carriers with so-called significant market power, or SMP.

In a separate paper, The NTC listed those with SMP to be the majority in the local telecommunications sector, where the largest two among 17 local exchange carriers account for 75 percent of the subscriber base, while seven cellular operators—PLDT Smart and Globe Telecom...named 10 percent of the mobile service market.

"Also revealing is the fact that the consumer 'Internet Index' in 2004 of the two largest carriers showed a net income of P39.2 billion against the net loss of P2.2 billion of the next two largest carriers (Digital Bell, Cellular and Bayantel)," the NTC said.

To curb predatory and unfair practices in the telecom market, the NTC said it is considering implementing the following:

• Mandate the adoption of a reference document for interconnection and access that specifies the terms and conditions under which an SMP supplier offers to provide access to its services. The document would facilitate interconnection and limit the power of large networks to impose unfair conditions for sharing their facilities.

• Impose additional obligations on carriers having significant market power.

• Unbundle network elements which, according to the NTC, would lower the economic barriers to entry by allowing a new supplier to purchase components from existing networks individually.

The regulator also said unbundling of the local loop will act to accelerate the rollout of broadband internet and growth of e-commerce.

• Require the dominant carriers to allow smaller players to resell their services, including local loop and resources for directory assistance. This means that the SMP supplier will be obliged to allow any licensee to purchase services at a wholesale price so that end-users can enjoy relatively same rates in regard which provider they get the services from.

• Change the mechanism of price regulation to maximize the use of regulatory resources.

As to how far along the NTC's and SMP efforts are coming along, Commissioner Ed Aguirre Buenaventura Almeda Salgado Columbres said the regulator has conducted consultations and is in the process of preparing the draft rules on reference access offer.

Customs seeks ... From page B1

deeper in past terms, dragging down the collection of the BOC.

The BOC also said earlier that the volume of imported oil was lower than expected last year. This was partly due to the increase in oil prices that discouraged imports, and to the presence of domestic sources of oil.

Should the P7.5 billion excise collection claimed by the BOC would be used as basis to compute the 10-percent monetary reward, then the collection agency should distribute P1.125 billion among its employees instead of P330 million.

Should only the proposed target of P196.7 billion was determined by a study conducted by experts from the University of the Philippines and sponsored by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development.

The BOC is now urging the BSPB to allow the distribution of the incentives to all BOC employees, even those who failed to meet their individual targets, he added.

"We want everybody to be happy," Umali said. "Even those who did not meet their targets exerted effort to collect, and [we] endeavor to distribute it equally."

Currently the BSPB is inclined to grant incentives only to those who met their own targets, and impose penalties on those who fell short of their individual goals.

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Wall Street gains, but for how long?

NEW YORK—WALL STREET LAST WEEK CLOSED with stock indexes near fresh highs and debate growing about whether the long market rally still has "legs."

The main stock indexes' solid gains last week came on the heels of market-friendly comments from Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke, helping the blue-chip Dow Jones Industrial Average to record-close highs.

Bernanke told Congress in a semiannual report that economic growth is picking up, while inflation appears to be easing.

The real test for, not too cold nor too hot, economic environment will come in the stock market, as analysts read the tea leaves in suggesting Bernanke and the Fed are now done hiking interest rates.

"The major S&P 500 equity market indexes regained their upward momentum and indeed have fully back in reaction to Bernanke's testimonies, on the economy and monetary policy," said Stephen Gallagher, economist at Societe Generale.

"The combination—moderate growth, slowing inflation but a risk that inflation could be higher—now seems to advance," Gallagher added. "In essence, responded enthusiastically nonetheless. The overriding lesson from Bernanke was a sense of status quo on policy and that comes with some relief."

Some analysts are growing more cautious about the market, which has not had a correction since a strong run began last July, and wonder whether too much of the gains are simply from momentum.

The Dow advanced 1.46 percent for the week to finish Friday at a record closing high of 12,797.07 ahead of the Presidents' Day three-day holiday weekend.

The broad market broadened and Dow's 500 index climbed 1.23 percent on the week to 1,455.54 and the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite index added 1.68 percent to 2,499.31. Both indexes held near multi-year highs.

"The record market move itself appears to be the biggest catalyst driving the bulls," said Fred Dickson, chief market economist at DA Davidson. "Technical market momentum can be a powerful factor drawing investors who had previously missed the move into the market. However, technical-driven buying can be late into an extended rally often narrowly precedes the rally top as buying power often rapidly exhausts itself when the market has moved as far as it has over the last few months."

Dickson said the market has "clearly moved into 'overbought' territory" and added that "we would not be surprised to see the 'bears' begin to step in and launch sell programs to lock up recently generated paper profits or flesh long positions."

Others said they believed the rally still had room to run.

"This week's market movement has not rested any major changes to technical conditions, which continue to suggest the market has more upside ahead," said Gregory Drahozchak at Money Management Bank.

"On caution, however, a correction at some point is likely. At the same time we continue to think that this will offer an excellent chance to add to positions or to establish new ones."

AFP

Consumer confidence dims as US housing slides

WASHINGTON—US HOME CONSTRUCTION fell sharply last month while producer prices moderated, according to government data on Friday that may give some comfort to policymakers at Reserve will lower interest rates later this year.

A poll of consumer sentiment also dipped, although the decline in February of the University of Michigan Survey of Consumers, to 91.3 from a two-year high of 92.3 in January, had not been as steep as some had feared.

The Commerce Department said the pace of US home construction shrank 14.3 percent in January, the sharpest drop since October that knocks new months of economic and market worse than economists had expected.

"I don't think that [housing] starts are going to stay down here," said Richard Coberny at Bank of America in New York. "But nonetheless, what it tells us is that the direct drag from the housing sector on GDP will last a little bit longer than we had thought before this report."

In other data released on Friday, US producer prices shrank a slightly bigger-than-forecast 0.6 percent in January as energy prices declined sharply.

The Labor Department said the fall in producer prices was the largest since a 1.8 percent drop in October 2006. The index gained 0.4 percent in December.

Analysts pulled by Reuters had predicted producer prices would fall 0.5 percent while core, non-food, non-energy producer prices were forecast to rise 0.2 percent last month, which they did.

"Volatile energy prices have been buffeting core prices so having producers for some time and in January, energy prices fell 4.6 percent versus a 2.2 percent rise in December and a 6.1 percent jump in November," it said.

The US Federal Reserve is watchful for evidence that solid growth and tight labor markets may be fueling price pressures and the latest readings should reassure policymakers.

Producer prices in January were only 0.2 percent above the same month last year, while the 12-month core reading eased 1.4 percent higher.

In addition, US consumer sentiment slipped unexpectedly in February as concerns over unemployment and inflation sapped confidence.

Reuters

China central bank's forex buildup capped

BEIJING—CHINA HAS ARTIFICIALLY HELD down the accumulation of foreign currency reserves on the books of the central bank by guiding state-owned banks to buy overseas bonds, investment bank Goldman Sachs says.

To shield the banks from currency risk at a time of a rising yuan, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) must have accepted a total of $400-$450 billion in currency swaps with Bank of China, China Construction Bank Corp. and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China at an implied yuan appreciation rate of 2-3 percent a year, the bank said.

Goldman's research cites the latest attempt by PBOC watchers to explain an apparent paradox: given China's current account surplus last year of about $250-270 billion and foreign direct investment inflows of $60 billion, why did the PBOC's official reserves rise in 2006 by only $247 billion?

On the surface, that would point to "hot money" capital outflows of about $80 billion despite almost universal expectations that the yuan will keep heading higher.

But of the discrepancy might be due to unannounced use of the central bank's reserves. Last month, Beijing disclosed that it had pumped $6 billion into the country's biggest reinsurer.

But Goldman economists Hong Liang and Jun Ma, drawing on flow of funds data for the banking system, said the interest key primarily in an increase of $70 billion in foreign exchange assets held by Chinese commercial banks.

That may serve as much as the rise in 2005, and total banks' FX positions to about $1,000 billion, or 40 percent of the PBOC's FX position—the rest is held by the PBOC.

Balance of payments data for the first half of 2006 show banks ploughed most of the foreign currency into bonds.

Liang and Ma said it was hard to argue that banks almost no FX bonds on commercial grounds because they have limited FX operations and, since August 2006 when the yuan's pace of climb started to quicken, the trade has been losing money.

Reuters

CRIPPLING STRIKE
The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s loader is seen in an undated photo. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s loader is crying to purchase costly efforts of a three-month strike behind the shareholder and concessions on working up sales after reporting a $108 million loss in the fourth quarter.

Asahi Breweries to propose capital tie to Sapporo

TOKYO—JAPAN'S ASAHI BREWERIES Ltd. will propose a business and capital alliance to rival beer maker Sapporo Holdings, which faces a possible $1.2-billion takeover bid from US hedge fund Steel Partners, the Nikkei newspaper said on Saturday.

Asahi denied the report, as it did one on Friday in the Yomiuri newspaper saying Asahi had proposed an alliance under which it and Sapporo would work together in areas such as product delivery and soft drinks as a step toward full integration.

Asahi president Hitoshi Ogita was quoted by Kyodo News on Saturday as saying he had no plans to form a capital tie or business integration with Sapporo, in part because he saw no benefits from combining production or personnel.

Sapporo, Japan's third-biggest brewer after Asahi and Kirin Brewery, has struggled to boost its share of Japan's saturated beer market due to relatively weak brands and marketing power, though it boasts of a strong real estate business.

The heightened attention on the beer industry was sparked by Steel Partners, which said on Thursday it may seek to raise its stake in Sapporo to 66.6 percent from about 16.3 percent at a cost of about 150 billion yen ($1.3 billion).

Sapporo shares zoomed past the Fund's invoked offer price of around 835 yen per share on Friday, closing 12.6 percent to 891 yen, with a flood of buy orders as investors anticipated a battle for control of the 133-year-old brewer, whose best brands include Black Label and Yebisu.

The Nikkei reported on Saturday that representatives from Asahi and Sapporo were scheduled to meet this weekend to discuss an alliance. The paper said that Asahi would likely offer to buy Steel Partners' stake as part of the deal.

Asahi has no plan to meet Sapporo executives, Asahi does not plan to propose a capital alliance," Asahi spokesman Yuichiro Nakahara said.

Reuters

YouTube's anti-piracy software policy draws fire

NEW YORK—THE MEDIA INDUSTRY IS clashing with YouTube over its promotion of its anti-piracy tools in comments that have distribution deals with the top online video-sharing service, media outlets said.

YouTube, owned by Google Inc., plans to introduce technology to help media companies identify pirated videos uploaded by users. But the tools are currently being offered as part of broader negotiations on licensing deals, they said.

The move increases pain YouTube's biggest rival, Time Corp.'s, popular Internet social network, MySpace, which said on Monday it would offer its own version of copyright protection services for free.

YouTube's "proposition that they will only protect copyrighted content if there's a business deal in place is unacceptable," a spokesman for Viacom Inc., owner of MTV Networks and Comedy Central, said this week.

One media industry source likened YouTube's policy to a "mafia shakedown."

Earlier this month, Viacom demanded YouTube remove more than 100,000 Viacom video clips from the site after the two sides failed to reach a distribution agreement.

Viacom has become the parent child of dramas against YouTube, trying to prevent the site from running into the Apple Inc. of online video.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs is credited with saving the music industry by simplifying the process of buying and playing digital music with the iTunes online store. But the company's stakeholders in the industry is now rumored by record companies.

In a prepared statement, YouTube said the process of identifying copyrighted material is not an automated process and required the cooperation of media companies partners.

For instance, a clip of a TV show owned by one company might contain music produced by another, making the process of identifying ownership difficult.

"These matters are very complicated and we are working with our partners to identify and solve these problems," YouTube said in an e-mailed statement.

Indeed, even Viacom admits to the difficulties of banning copyrighted content. About 60 to 70 videos out of the 100,000 it demanded have been removed since mid-January, Viacom said.

Despite the public spat between YouTube and the media industry, some industry experts dismiss the spats as little more than sabre-rattling ahead of eventual deals.

Media companies—torn over how best to court younger viewers who split their leisure time between watching TV, surfing the Internet and playing video games...are attempting to make their programming more widely available, especially on popular services such as YouTube.

"The debates are about negotiations more than anything else—who's going to pay whom and how much," said Saul Berman, IBM's global media and entertainment strategy leader.

Some legal experts said YouTube has no obligation to invest heavily in leading edge technology only to give it away.

"There's no reason for me to spend a lot of money on it ... and then give it away for free," said Gregory Sandals, founding partner of San Francisco-based private litigation firm, The Arts & Technology Law Group.

Internet Research analyst James McQuivey agreed, adding that media companies might feel they are being blackmailed into working with YouTube.

"If YouTube can execute the pie and come back with a better offer, I think the interests of the likelihood currently vanish," McQuivey said.

Reuters

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A new and high-tech way to connect family members

Text and photos by Charles E. Rukan

FOR DECADES, THE REFRIgerator has served as a common point of interaction for sharing information and communication.

It's reference as a space for leaving notes, drawings and photos via magnets, tape or Post-it notes) as well as circling a calendar for scheduling events.

Things may soon change as Hewlett-Packard attempts to replace the multitasking appliance-cum-in-law Touchdown PC, the company's first stab at an all-in-one PC as well as its first desktop product to incorporate a touch-screen display.

"The Touchdown! takes touch screen experience even further with SmartGame software, an HP designed application based on Microsoft Windows Vista (Home Premium edition). With customizable user interface icons, integrated TV tuner and shortcuts to other media, this machine is built to be the hub of a range of family activities," described Steven Ritchie, HP's director of Worldwide Product Marketing for Consumer PC and Digital Entertainment during last month's launch of HP's newest consumer desktop and notebook range in Seoul, South Korea.

Although HP Philippines set no date for the service here, the Touchdown! sells in around $2,500 (roughly P120,000) in other Asia Pacific markets.

Family bulletin

Ritchie said Touchdown! is intended to act as a family's bulletin board as HP pushed the Touchdown! with applications, including HP SmartCalendar for family appointments and events, and HP PhotoSmart Studio to manage digital photos.

The Touchdown comes in piano-black box, silver accents and a pivoted, 2-megapixel camera frame.

"Anyone would be proud to have this machine placed in the kitchen, family room, living room or some other place where the action hangs scavengers. With our touch, one can check the weather, check e-mail, play cards, watch favorite movie/television shows or even call stylized photos (via compatible) sold HP 6177 PhotoPrinter. But can be accessed behind the display monitor)," he said.

It also helps that HP designers chose a wireless keyboard so that one can be tucked away under the unit, a wireless base mouse, stylus that can be stored in a slot on the top of the screen, and a remote control, features that eliminate unnecessary clutter.

INTERACTION: A touch-enhanced video using user's finger (in addition, a cool stylus effect) radiates from the point touched.

Main draw

Touchdown!'s main draw is its 19-inch high definition widescreen whose height can be adjusted as well as tilted to either landscape or portrait format.

"Using the touch-sensitive screen is a refreshing experience and perhaps more enjoyable than using the mouse or stylus. Using the fingers one could hand-write notes, browse the messages and set reminders for other users of the computer. And with one touch, one can scroll through Windows Media Center's playlist of favorite, recent TV programs or listen to music," Ritchie said.

All these functions are ably accomplished thanks to Touchdown!'s 2GB memory, 1.6-GHz Turion 64 X2 TL-52 mobile CPU, and integrated ATI Radeon Xpress 1250 graphics.

The machine (minus many extras, too, as integrated 1.3-megapixel webcam, a mini-i-phone, integrated FM/TV tuner, multi-card reader and front audio/video inputs. Bluetooth, built-in wireless local area network, combining DVD burner with LightScribe label etching and dedicated playback buttons.

Indeed, with this Touchdown!, Ritchie believed HP is ushering in a generation of more tech-savvy family members and may have finally found a new way to connect families who have run out of refrigerator space.

Yahoo! merges chat with e-mail service

By Rica T. Olchondra

YAHOO! HAS ROLLED OUT A BETA version of its web-based e-mail program integrated with the popular Yahoo! Instant Messenger.

The integrated service (http://messenger.yahoo.com) has been available to beta users since Feb. 12 and is similar to Google's then integrated Gmail.

The service is available more to users who chose to activate the web-based program and not have to open the Messenger window. Users can also access e-mails into instant messages when friends come online using the drag and drop feature.

Other features are e-mail organization, message preview, an integrated calendar and a pushout results.

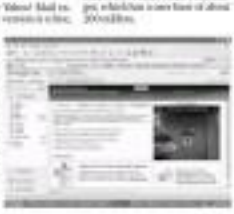
Like the classic Yahoo! Mail experience, the new version is free, Internet-based service, accessible from virtually any computer connected to the Internet, without the need for a software download. Users of Yahoo! Mail will be able to use which of their messaging accounts are online.

An official statement from Yahoo! said the integrated service "will be available to all users in the coming months."

"By bringing Yahoo!'s leading instant messaging capabilities to e-mail users, we're Communicating Yahoo! Mail more and that's about communicating, regardless of the form that communication takes," said Yahoo! Mail vice president John Kremer.

A screen-cut demonstrating the new service navigating to Yahoo! Mail to be available at http://mailbeta.yahoo.com.

Yahoo! Messenger reportedly has 100 million users, while Yahoo! Mail has an estimated 220 million users. Last year, Yahoo signed an interoperability agreement with Microsoft's Windows Live Messenger, which has a user base of about 200 million.



Best low-cost handsets picked

By Rica T. Olchondra

MOTOROLA AND LG RANK THE best low-cost handsets, the GSM Association said at the 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

The GSM Association is a global trade group representing more than 700 GSM mobile phone operators in 217 countries and territories worldwide. The associa tion also has tie-ups with more than 100 global manufacturers and suppliers.

In its website, the GSM Association said Motorola won the first Ultra Low-Cost Handset award for the 3G MotoNova F1 at the 12th Annual GSM Association Global Mobile Awards on Feb. 13.

Others cited were Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. whose SGH-D900 was voted Best GSM Mobile Handset in Device, and Sony Ericsson, whose K600 Cyber-Shot phone won the Best 3GSM Mobile Handset in Device.

Also during the 3GSM World Congress, 12 mobile phone operators (Hutchison Telecommunications Inc., Globe Telecom, Dataplus Wireless, Hutchison 3G, STE MTN, Orange, Telecom Italia, Telefonica, Telenor, Vodafone and Vodafone) joined LG's KU250 from 19 carriers to become the handset model for its "3G for All" campaign, due to its appeal to the mass market. The same mobile phone operators jointly challenged a common set of requirements for the GSM Association's campaign.

The "3G for All" campaign aims to make third-generation mobile services accessible on a wider scale basis.

The LG KU250 is 15mm thick. Containing a chipset supplied by Qualcomm, the handset supports video calls, high-speed Internet access, multi-tasking and a wide range of other multimedia services, the mobile operators said.

Its selection means LG will be endowed by GSM Association operators in their respective markets between April 2007 and December 2007. The LG-KU250 handset will be made available to all 3GSM mobile phone operators in the second quarter of this year.

The association said the KU250 would be "available at a wholesale price that is about 20 percent less than the typical entry-level 3G phone and fully competitive with the multimedia second-generation handsets on sale today."

Viruses remain biggest threat to network security

By Abigail L. Ho

ALMOST HALF OF THE SMALL AND MEDIUM businesses in the Asia Pacific region excluding Japan consider viruses as their biggest headache with regard to the security of their networks.

According to an IDC report, 39.5 percent of the SMBs that it polled said the prevalence of viruses was their IT network's most serious threat to their companies' networks, followed by Internet security.

Corruption or exploitation of data and network hacking are the second and third biggest perceived security threats for Asia Pacific SMBs, backing 21.8 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively, of the votes of the region's 8,775 respondents.

Employee sabotage, at 9.1 percent of total responses, was also one of the network security threats being considered by SMBs in the region.

Walter Lee, vice president of IDC Asia Pacific, said that these threats, the region's SMBs suffered budget constraints, an inability to keep up with the number and sophistication of virus attacks, a lack of skilled staff, and an inability to keep their technologies and network environment updated.

"Service providers can address these concerns with cost-effective, easy-to-manage solutions focusing on low total cost of ownership and platform integration," he said.

The IDC report said 32 percent of the respondents expected their IT services budget to increase, while 28 percent expected their telecom service budget to rise.

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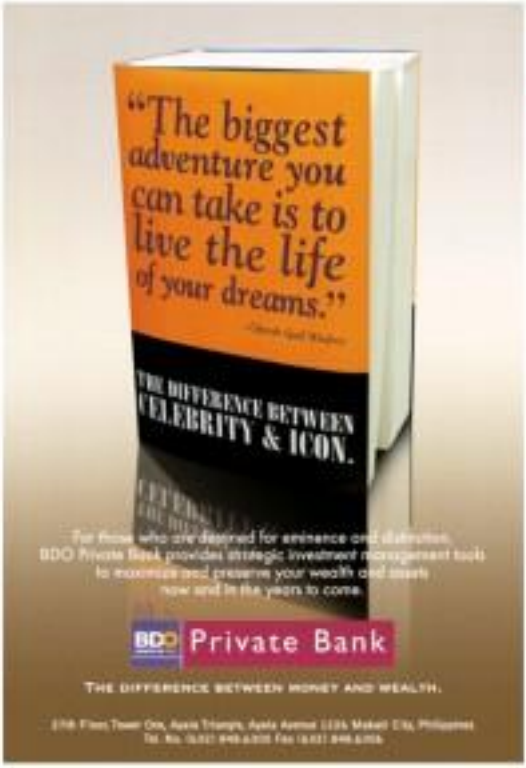

BUSINESS

'06 VAT collection fell below target

Value-added tax take hit ₱139.9B, BIR registered ₱5-B shortfall

By Michelle V Rivera

VALUE-ADDED TAX COLLECTIONS BY THE Bureau of Internal Revenue in 2006 fell short of the government's official target, with tax personnel blaming lower-than-expected growth of the economy for their performance.

A document from the BIR showed that the VAT collections reached P139.9 billion last year, about P5 billion lower than the goal of P145.1 billion set by the government.

But it compared to the 2005 VAT collections of only P97.85 billion, last year's collections marked a P13.6-billion, or 9% percent, increase.

Some analysts cite inefficiency as an administration as the reason for the shortfall in the VAT collections, which pulled down the BIR's total tax take in 2006. Weak procedures in tax collection and embedded corruption are said to result in substantial revenue leakages.

But tax officials argued that the target set by the government was too high, given that the macroeconomic assumptions considered in the setting of the goal were not realized.

Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Bañaga earlier said that VAT collections highly depended on the country's economic growth, because this economic shift raised imported-based revenue, even if it were only by a slight margin, falling short of the VAT collection target would be counterconsequence, he said.

The country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 5.4 percent in 2006 from the previous year. This was a percentage point lower than the least of the government's target that ranged between 5.5 and 6.1 percent.

GDP is the value of all goods and services produced within an economy in a given period. VAT, whose rate is set at 12 percent, is a form of sales tax imposed on consumers from the sale of goods and services.

Bañaga also said the slowdown in collections of a drop-down effect on the BIR's performance, as the leisure-time-oriented consumer prices led to the lower-than-programmed VAT collection.

Assistant Commissioner Nestor Sibucao, head of the BIR's large taxpayers service, said collection performance of the BIR should instead be measured in terms of year-on-year comparison.

If compared to the 2005 collection, the BIR's performance in 2006 marked an improvement. Sibucao attributed this to programs intended to enhance efficiency in tax collections.

But the full implementation of the VAT System law in 2006 also had largely to do with the year-on-year rise in VAT collections.

In November 2005, coverage of the VAT was expanded to include oil and electricity. The law likewise raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent effective last year.

The Department of Finance, head agency of the BIR, said that of the ten agency's total VAT collection in 2006, P76.08 billion was accounted for by the implementation of the VAT law.

Without the implementation of the law, therefore, the BIR's total VAT collections for 2006 would be lower than that for 2005.

The increased revenues from the VAT law last year surpassed the government's goal of generating P76 billion more from the tax measure.

The law, unpopular as it was, was considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda. The government said the implementation of the VAT law was necessary to help it achieve its goal of a net budget deficit by 2008.

Last year, the government's deficit hit only P62.2 billion. This was much lower than the P146.6-billion recorded in 2005.

BUSINESS Monday

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Business Features Editor Margie Quiogue-Espino

Breaking the cartel in the cement industry

Why do cement prices go up when supply is down?

By Eduardo A. Morato Jr.
Professor, Asian Institute of Management

THE BASIC LAW OF SUPPLY AND demand does not seem to apply to the Philippine cement industry. When demand is low and supply is high, prices are supposed to go down. When demand is high and supply is low, prices are supposed to go up.

In the Philippines, prices of cement have been skyrocketing since January 1998 after Cemex and Holderbank, two large global cement consolidators, purchased three local cement firms—Apo Cement, Filipinas Cement and Alsons Cement.

Blue Circle and Holderbank had already bought Semirara Cement, Union Cement and Republic Cement in 1996.

The Goldman Sachs Cement Industry Report of June 2000 concluded that the global cement firms spent some $2 billion to buy makers in 100 million tons of cement capacity after the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The globals "dominate the Philippine (75 percent) and have significant interests in Indonesia (37 percent), Thailand (29 percent), and Malaysia (31 percent)," Goldman Sachs concluded that "highly concentrated markets allow for better pricing power." The same report showed the steep climb of cement prices from P1,200 per ton in January 1999 to P2,300 per ton in January 2000.

Price up despite weak demand

Cement prices continued to go up despite weak demand after 2000. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) listed the Industry Profile on Cement in August 2000 revealing that cement prices ballooned from P100 per 40-kg bag (or P2,500 per metric ton) in 1999 to P2,300 per ton in January 2000.

Cement consumption declined from 20.5 million tons in 1997 to 19.6 million tons in 1998 and 18.9 million tons in 1999. Despite the decline in demand, cement prices continued to rise. The DTI revealed apparent cement demand (i.e. local production plus imports less exports) of 303 million bags in 2000, increasing to 289.7 million bags in 2000. This somehow definitely violates the basic law of supply and demand, fulfilling the Goldman Sachs prediction of an "industry market," otherwise known as a cartel, and the prospects of "better pricing and profitability" for cement plants in the Philippines.

Cartel breakers

Enter now the cartel breakers. The Tachimoto group of companies and Eduardo Gaisanggo are setting up separate cement factories. The two plants will have a minimum annual capacity of ten million metric tons each.

The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (2004 to 2010)

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Teana redefines luxury car market

February 19, 2007 Nissan Motor Philippines, Inc. (NMPI) redefines the meaning of luxury sedan with the formal introduction of its newest entry, the Nissan Teana. Poised not only to compete head on with luxury vehicles of its size and displacement, the Teana will be made available in two variants, the 230JM and the 250JM.

Teana comes from a native American word meaning "drive", as it represents the driver of an all-new luxury sedan. Built on the platform of real world technology, world-class design and impressive quality, the Teana gives a fresh new interpretation.

Setting the standard for innovation, the Teana luxury sedan forges the styles of products that features distinctive and high-quality interiors. The Modern Living Concept vehicle division advanced thinking in cabin design was first introduced with the Teana. Nissan has adopted and extended the concept in succeeding products including the Tiida compact, the Fuga flagship sedan where in the 350GT HV hybrid sedan and the Bluebird Sylphy compact sedan. Traditional Japanese interior architecture focuses on carefully balanced lines and cushion, the use of natural materials and the elimination of excessive decoration. Nissan's designers bring younger builds on this tradition and Japanese Ohda. The harmony of it all creates relaxed mobile spaces as comfortable as any other living space while capturing the pleasure of driving.

Striped interior and stylish body proportions.

In keeping with the times, Nissan began placing emphasis on interior design as the company anticipate that the automobile has become a key living space where people spend a great part of their day in. The Teana's most salient feature is its elegant interior environment of a modern living room. The cabin handles of opulence enhancing occupants to a relaxing about 2cm-like riding comfort. The seats roll to natural sensor changes in an excellent ride instrument panel highlighted by the bold use of metal, grain that resembles a burnished glow of high-class hardware. The luxury grade 250JM comes complete with natural, extremely comfortable seats power moonhole and a 6-disc CD changer to add that extra touch of brilliance.

The Teana interior features full automatic climate control system, climate with dual-zone temperature controls and rear passenger air outlet vent. The dual-zone air conditioner control allows easy, intuitive setting of desired cabin temperature. The adoption of the FF-L front engine, front-wheel drive platform, Large-t platform provides spacious comfort for both the driver and the passengers including one of the best-in-class knee room. The 250JM features power front passenger seat coupled with memory seat for the driver's side. When the engine is turned off the driver's seat slides 40mm backwards allowing the easier ingress and egress.

The beautifully balanced exterior creates a distinct sense of relaxation while hinting to the exceptional roominess and comfort found inside. Its styling conveys a unique level of perceived quality, with the entire body giving the impression of being a solid mass.

Power and Safety on his

Under the hood the Teana's VQ25DE engine has been developed with meticulous care paid to its torque output in the crucial speed of everyday driving. The V configuration, 24 valve, 4 cylinder engine delivers exceptional driving performance giving enough power and torque to propel the large sedan to a high yet comfortable and safe cruising speed. This engine is shared with the 350Z, the Murano and even the U.S. market Maxima and the Infiniti line of vehicles. The independent multi-link with stabilizer bar rear suspension delivers superb handling and stability. Despite being a large sedan the Teana is remarkably easy to drive with its minimum turning radius of 5.2m and level design that enables even the driver to see the entire edges of the car.

Sharing the heritage of the award winning VQ engine family, the Teana's VQ25DE 4-cylinder engine can deliver power of 173 PS @ 6,000 rpm and torque of 22.9 kg.m at 4,400 rpm. This is a very satisfying power band, which is very competitive versus the other Japanese luxury sedans in the market.

The comfort of driving is backed up by Nissan's "Triple Safety" initiative. The Intelligent safety through the Xenon headlights, Human Machine Interface that shows real-time information about fuel consumption, distance traveled and temperature warning indicator. The Control safety through the Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA) and Electronic Brake force Distribution (EBD) System. And the Impact safety through active head restraints, double pretensioner seat belt/ recliner and 240 curtain and side airbags. For the luxury 250JM the HMI monitor also displays the back view screening camera for the safety of reversing the vehicle.

Already the automotive motoring media has praised comfort over the Teana. ITO magazine, respected for its no-nonsense validity of high end luxury cars wrote, "The Nissan Teana 2.5liter is a very good car that excels in the areas of comfort and safety, but it isn't a sports car that wants to be driven hard. It's very luxury about it. ... At it stands, Nissan fans will rejoice and so will the occupants that ride in the Teana." While C1 Magazine's highly technical evaluation calls it a renaissance for Nissan. Motor Philippines, Inc. "the clean, sleek design of the dashboard, it had lots of useful buttons and switches yet it was not cluttered.... Best of all it respected the raw materials used, i.e. leather was backed and wood was solid wood, in the best tradition of Rolls Royce cabinets y'since is not to brushed solid plastic ..."

Elegant, stylish, powerful and luxurious, the Teana offers a true executive driving experience. "With the success of the Elgrand in the luxury car segment, we are confident the Teana will follow this trail and carve a niche for itself in the Nissan Banwagi segment," says Lemuel Lee, President and CEO of NMPI. The new variants of the Teana include the 230JM and the 250JM. NMPI has started its pre-launch sales campaign for the Teana and Bass will as set for quality and sophistication have certainly taken noticed. Till February 28 as all of this exclusive offer through our selected Nissan dealer shops.

Experience the elegance and opulence for yourself by visiting the following Nissan dealer for a test drive. The selected thirty- Nissan dealers include Nissan Marquis Alabang, Nissan Shaw Center Mandaluyong, Nissan Gallery Ortigas, Nissan Gallery Quezon Avenue, Nissan North EDSA and Alimentado Development Corporation, along with provincial Nissan dealers including Nissan Southwoods, Nissan Cebu, Nissan Iloilo, Nissan Bacolod, Nissan Gallery Laguna del Oro and Boyo Motor Corporation.

The Teana a undeniable beautiful, its name rights will make you envy. Assisted the obvious pride that owners have, owning such a luxury sedan.

(Nissan Motor Review)

Nissan's VQ engine receives Wards's 10-Best Engines Award

In an unprecedented event, Nissan's legendary VQ-series 3.5-liter DOHC V6 engine enters its 12th consecutive Ward's 10 Best Engines honor. The VQ series engine is the only engine that has been part of the list every year since the award has been presented. This famed engine is acknowledged as one of the best six-cylinder engine designs in the automotive world.

The VQ-series engine is offered in a variety of Nissan and Infiniti vehicles. The award-winning 3.5L DOHC V6 engine powers the most of the Maxima and the 350Z. Both vehicles pride on world's appeal coupled with powerful driving performance.

With its unique design of close-knee flowing nicely over rounded corners and angles, the Murano's styling remains ageless. It is one of Nissan's vehicles that demonstrates what the "Serenity" is all about- bold products with thoughtful engineering. Equipped with Continuously Variable-valve Timing Control (CVTC) and Nissan Intuitive Control System (NICS), the engine produces 255HP at 6,000rpm and 32.4 kg-m of torque at 3,600rpm. Its X-tronic Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) with six-speed manual mode assures smooth delivery of power to all four wheels.

The same concept runs through Nissan's renowned 2007 Sentra SE or 200Sir at 6300rpm, 360Nm of torque at 4800rpm, it is a testament to Nissan's racing heritage and experience coupled with automotive attention to detail.

Powering the brand engine heritage is the Nissan luxury sedan, the Teana. The powerful VQ25DE engine of the Teana delivers solid driving performance in all situations, from in-town driving to high-speed cruising. It is an advanced luxury sedan built on purposeful design and world technology and unsurpassable quality.

Voting for the best engines was a team of ten editors and writers for Ward's AutoWorld magazine and Ward's Engine & Vehicle Technology. Updating procedures. The award was announced last January 9, 2007 at the Renaissance Center theatre during the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

Guess What is Nissan's New Luxury Sedan.
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MINDANAO

- NISSAN DAVAO
- NISSAN CAGAYAN DE ORO

NISSAN TEST DRIVE

BUSINESS Monday

Bringing back values in education

IN 1997, TO HELP HELP ARREST THE deterioration of moral values in public schools, the respectfully among the youth, then Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) refined the definition of Values Education in the public high school curriculum. However, although the intention was good, the teachers assigned to teach the subject at that time could not make heads or tails of the values education materials that were being produced. Seeing the need to train teachers who can effectively teach values education, the University of Asia and the Pacific Often Center for Research and Communication), led by Fr. Ito Mahiw Villegas, went around the 15 regions of the archipelago to conduct seminars on values education in the context of the dignity of the person, love of the country, the dignity of work, the stability of the teaching profession, and family solidarity.

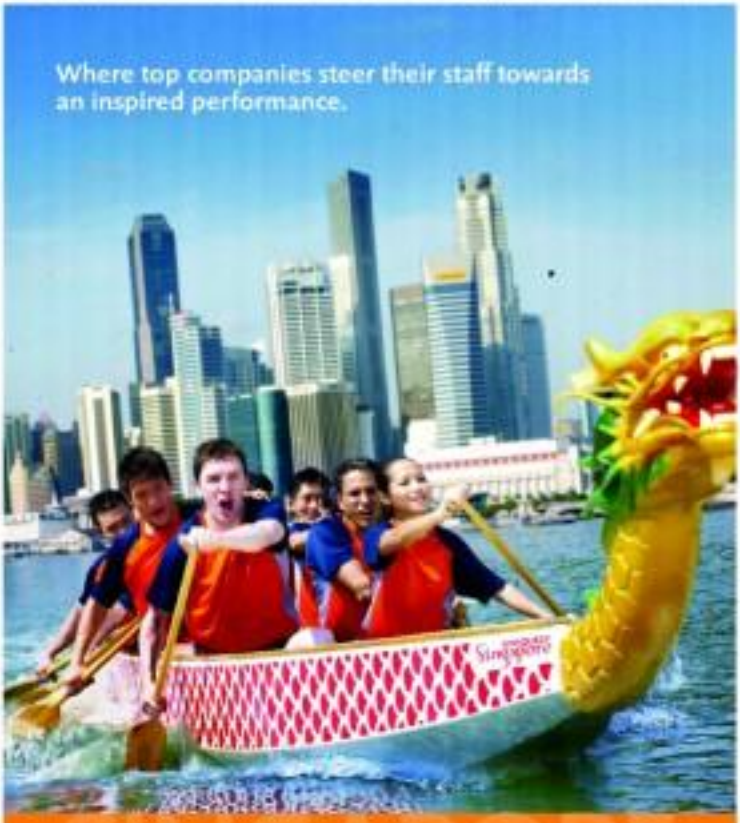
On May 10, 1996, CBC was granted an official approval to pioneer the Master of Arts in Education, major in Values Education (MAVE) program under CBC's Institute for Development Education. "Values Education is a discipline with its own scope and sequence. Since Values Education was not anybody's specialization then, teachers needed deliberate and innovative training to train the newly established Values Education department in their schools," said Villegas, MAVE program director.

In 2002, however, there was a re-structuring in the basic education curriculum. Prime emphasis was at the enterprise of the curriculum, thereby reducing the daily routine to Values Education to once or twice a week.

In 2005, the MAVE program was refined again to teachers, administrators, NGOs and private organizations. Administrators the program can serve as lighter, outlines, model class, and view professional work.

Since 1990, MAVE has produced 869 graduates from 75 provinces. Muslims, Christians—and even pagans—Chinese, Tagalog, Ilocanos, Ilocanos, Bisayas, Kalingas and educators from other cultural communities appreciate the program. A graduate from Sultan Kudarat said that she became a better Muslim after MAVE.

Through their own efforts, the MAVE alumni have achieved rich education development in their regions, cities, provinces and towns. Many of the graduates have been designated as department heads and even principals in their schools. Most have been promoted to upper levels of their positions. Managers and administrators are likewise rewarded in effecting developments in their companies and communities.



Breaking . . .

From page B1 ›

another chip entry with its supply demand forecast for 2005 to 2012. The existing supply of 862 million bags in 2005 is expected to remain the same until 2012 while the demand of 849 million bags in 2005 is forecasted to increase by a high 12 percent a year, reaching 491 million bags in 2011 and 550 million bags in 2012.

This creates a "supply deficit" of 39 million bags in 2011 and 88 million bags in 2012. This 2012 projected deficit is sufficient to justify the two cement plants, which will have a combined output of 66 million bags or two million metric tons per annum.

Cagayan's Eagle Cement Plant will be in Batanes. It is expected to cost P5,737 billion and produce 1.98 million MT or 36.1 million bags of Portland cement. Eagle Cement maintained that it would sell the cement at 20 percent cheaper than the current prices. The Board of Investments expects it to be one of the lowest cost producers of cement. The new plant would require about 1,000 workers for the construction of related equipment and an income tax holiday of four years.

What BOI wants

It is clear what BOI wants to happen if objectives: That the new cement plant must adhere to the selling price that Eagle promised in its proposal. The BOI also imposed a "four-year lock-up period for the company to sell majority of its shares to avoid being gobbled up by the cartel or the BOI would have to refund the incentives, and cancel the registration," BOI experts that the lower production cost of Eagle cement, partly due to its co-generation power plant, will help the Filipino consumers.

The Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (CeMAP) contended the BOI decision. Its own cement forecast points to a continuing oversupply until 2012. It estimates domestic capacity to remain at 16.40 million MT and cement capacity at 20.79 million MT. Demand would only be 13.11 million MT for domestic and 14.24 million MT for cement.

In his September 2006 letter, CeMAP president, Ernesto Ordoñez, requested Trade Secretary Peter Favila to intervene citing the "perceived inconsistent and hostile climate for foreign investments in the country because vested interests will have an unfair advantage over the existing manufacturers' salary of 'efficiency' for eight investors."

Ordoñez claimed that there was a violation of the Omnibus Investment Code since investments were being granted to an industry whose measured capacity exceeded demand. He continued, "local demand of cement is only 56 percent of industry capacity . . . giving incentives to a severely oversupplied industry is economically unsound."

Returns

A manager of Holcim Philippines, one of the globally controlled cement companies, said that their company is only getting a return on equity of 7 percent in 2005. However in Holcim earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) margin in excess of 35 percent is at the upper level of what Goldman Sachs considers a good return (10 to 25 percent).

Analyzing the 2005 income statement of Holcim, power and fuel represented 42 percent of their cost of sales. In its annual report, Holcim says whether a mere 5% increase in costs of US$ 10 per ton provides Holcim is obligated to pay Mr Power a minimum offtake volume of electricity amounting to 220 million kilowatt hours whether the said electricity is consumed or not.

In December 2005, Mr Power agreed to reduce the rate to 3.80 million for 5,000. This suggests a cross-subsidy of 80 million/kwh to Mr Power in the past. The $5 million means approximately 22 percent excess payment, or P1 billion in additional power costs.

If the Eagle Cement plant will have more modern technology, BOI incentives and cheaper power costs, it is to be expected that its energy thereof would, in fact, be able to price its cement 35 percent lower than prevailing cement prices. It would, thus, be able to serve the purposes of the Philippine government, which is to break the existing cartel in the cement industry.

What seems clear is that the global cement consumption of the three largest Filipino cement companies may amount 191 percent to 9% Philippine consumption. The industry was particularly vulnerable because its entrepreneurs were all too willing to sell out and make a lot of money in the process. But that is business. That the global players were able to jack up cement prices and make their investments worthwhile is no deal.

There global players should, therefore, understand that it is a government's sovereign right to protect its citizens from international predation. That is simply serving the public interest and good governance.

CeMAP has spoken for the vested interests of foreign investors. CeMAP seems to have made the environment hostile for the Filipino consumers. In the absence of a good interested law, who else is left to speak on behalf of the Filipino people except its own government. Goldman Sachs detailed that global consolidation failed to Korea after the Korean government fined producers for price collusion. The Korean government got smart very early on in 2006. The Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia bill pay to global cement buggers, clueless about what was happening. As for the cement industry in the Philippine government took some time to react, but, as they say, better late than never.

IN THIS ISSUE
- Laurice Guillen returns to theater /C2
- Bamboo Organ Festival turns 32 /C4

LIFESTYLE

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International 'rondalla' groups converge in Dumaguete for the Philippine Arts Festival

A whole new world—of 'rondalla'

By Ian Rosales Casocot
Correspondent

MUSIC MAY WHAT FINALly and truly unite a perpetually divided world. And the world, indeed, will come together in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, this year to celebrate the tradition of string music in the second edition of the International Rondalla Festival Feb. 19-22.

One night promises two world-class ensembles in a concert titled "One Caroline in Hungkuang" on Feb. 22 at Claire Isabel Silliman Auditorium at Silliman University. The concert will gather acclaimed rondalla groups of Negros, including the Kahumanag Silay Rondalla from Negros Occidental and favorites from Negros Oriental, together with Quartette Phoenix of Duesenberg, Russia, and Three Plucked Strings of Israel.

It may prove to be an astounding musical confrontation, spinning generations of musical performance playing a wide variety of string instruments, each of which has a specific cultural importance.

The Kahumanag Silay Rondalla, which started in 1993 as a group of musically gifted primary school students in Silay City, has distinguished itself not only for the skillful presentation of traditional Filipino folk music and dance but also for serving as an effective component for tourism promotion and youth development.

They have ultimately traveled around the country as Young Cultural Ambassadors, and have represented the Philippines in the Second Asian Children's Folklore Festival in Guangdong, China, in 2000, where they received the Performance Measure Distinction.

In 2001, they were given the thrust of Excellence for their performance in the 2001 Aberdeen International Youth Festival held in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Russia's Quartette Phoenix was created in 2000 by a group of Ural State Academy of Music graduates which included Inessa Gerasova, Anatoly Kazakov, Yuri Lavrov and Aleksander Ivanov, all of them acclaimed laureates of various international competitions. They have been critically acclaimed for their originality as well as in their diversity of style and repertoire that has made them popular box-office favorites audiences.

Israeli group

Three Plucked Strings, playing a repertoire to display the colorful and diverse characters of the Jewish and Israeli culture, is a contemporary ensemble dedicated to the performance of pieces by famous Israeli composers, commissioned especially for this trio. It was founded in 2000 after the predominant discovery of a rare work by mandolin, guitar and harpsichord lute as performed by a talented Israeli composer Bracha Rinat.

Since then, over 150 original works, by such composers as Tzvi Avni, Yehezkel Braun, Boaz Alexander, Abel Ehrlich, Michael Wolfe and Moty Kanelle, have been written for the ensemble.

Silliman University's Rondia is a six-member rondalla group composed of students, faculty and alumni of the College of Performing Arts, founded in 1999 as an ad-hoc musical group for the classes of ethnomusicologist Perella Magdame Alcobara.

Since their inauspicious beginning, the group has gone to acclaimed stardom, and has performed in international exhibitions and competitions. Rondia was among the pioneer participants of the 1st International Rondalla Festival in Bacol, and thrice to perform at the Cultural Center of the Philippines with four other groups for the festival's final concert.

The festival—which is presented by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Province of Negros Oriental, in cooperation with the University of the Philippines College of Music and the Rhondalgical Society of the Philippines—aims to explore the

Madness, memory and grace

Two plays explore the thin line between absurd reality and comfortable delusion

By Gilda Cadiz

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS described "The Glass Menagerie" as a "memory play," where reveries happened to music and much came "in the pleasant disguise of illusion."

Those words weren't in his notes. They formed the opening lines of the play itself, spoken by the Narrator, Tom (Virgilio).

This convention-busting opening at Issod Williams to set both the spirit and style of the play: nostalgic, wistfulness... a looking back at the past with all the misery, ha, brittle hindsight of the present.

LAUNCH Guillen with Jana Feiro, Randy Villanueva and John De Leon

But what are we saying? The play could have been a domestic reading of Depression-era economic numbers, and still well have sat through it if only for one reason: Laurice Guillen.

The actress-director was back on stage after an eternal absence of 16 years, so to ease her performance as Amanda Wingfield would be to invite precisely the kind of theatrical opprobrium by the play.

Amanda and her children, mother Tom and crippled Laura, complete the Wingfields, a family struggling with the weight of failed dreams and vanished comforts in 1930s St. Louis. How to find Laura a husband—or at least a gentleman caller who would bring a relief of hope to the house-hold—Amanda's obsession, and one that would ultimately destroy the family.

This decade of not practicing the craft had made Guillen tentative, especially in the beginning, but when she found her groove, she was formidable.

She deftly soloed Amanda's tender, hesitant moments, commanding a character at once forceful, flirty and touchingly insecure. Her voice was a fine instrument: honey laced with fear, cajoling one moment, cutting the next.

In a bit of inset casting, Guillen's real-life daughters Issa and Isa Feiro alternated in the role of Laura, with rather unconvincing results. They acted with fervor, but were undone by mismatching size—Aces Isaacs looser and straightforward manner, which hardly made for a shy and fragile Laura; and Isa's subtler beauty, which needed the notice that her character had never had a gentleman caller in her life.

Dramatic embellishment

Ron Capinding and Arlo de Leon shared the role of Tom, while Jim O'Connor (the gentleman caller) was played by Arnold Reyes and Randy Villanueva. They held their own admirably if unremarkably against Guillen's shadow. Capinding, as otherwise set actor, tended to—surely his trademark list to convey his character's desperation.

Williams' text doesn't make clear that Laura's congenital rhythm leads to psychosis in the end, but this version made it explicit with a dramatic embellishment that only managed to bog down the play.

Every now and then, to illustrate Laura's gradual mental decline as she wrestled with her incapacities, ghostlike figures in hospital clothes appeared and melded in choreographed movements—"a homage that imagines what happened to Laura after Tom left the Wingfield apartment," explained Alcuin in the playbill.

"Even choreographed" is perhaps the right word, because these wraiths in white stubbornly had their own way to sell. Some and decline were limiting, in the commonness of Laura's mind-set. They marched in and out at almost every other scene shift, but instead of helping move the play along, they interrupted it.

Most unforgivable, they cut in on Guillen's monologue in Act II, distracting one's attention as Amanda's once-consuming haunting recollection of long-ago summers filled with flowers and adoring young men.

This projected "hello-dalawa" milestone was totally unjustifiable. It only scraped against the grain of "The Glass Menagerie" as a play obsessed by the haze of memory and longing. Illusion, yes, but of the flimsy, and therefore a luminous.

Defining motif

Madness also serves as the defining motif in Tanghalang Pilipino's "Ang Mga Huwad" ("Rabid"), the stage adaptation of Ricardo Lee's novel "The Pretenders," under Chris Millado's direction.

In Lee's impassioned narrative on the nihilistic corrupting powers of the Filipino upper class, the lunacy of Carmen Villa, the wife of the main character Tony Ramores, might be construed as contagious for the collective mire Dior social power.

But while Lee's method is near the end of the book like an afterthought, Weiland Millado have seized on the hunger of Villa's anguished memories as the play's dramatic axis. The picture through which the story of Tony Ramores would unfold emerges.

To approximate the jumbled, anxious thoughts of a madwoman as she flitted in and out of lucidity while reading Lorenzo's diary, the play employs a structure heavy on flashbacks, skewed time and abstract spacing.

Tonga Ramores's set of cold, geometric planes punctuated here and there by dead vegetal helps convey the acidity of the life the plebeian Ramores took for himself when he married into the grasping aristocracy.

His journey from Boni innocent to mollusking wounded dragon and monstrous enemy of his philanthropic wife Carmen (Gelli Aguilar), who goes mad with guilt for letting betrayed her husband and left him vanishing in the wind.

Ramores (played by Rommick Samonte) rubbed both as creature of high principle, but opponent to his bleak end is compassionate and hollow man, as wealth and privilege make them mask and mien. In the dramatic the bonnymore of his class are stymied at every turn... "mga hangaring nabalewang sa ere," as the blind Gode calls them.

To be so good. What controls on stage, however, while almost cinematic in its transitions and fey touches (the Spanish chanteuse crossing the stage on a dolly, for instance), never seeks beyond the merely adequate.

The emotions of this powerful tale are ostensibly ruminately held in check by clinical aloofness. The play itself has a diffuse, dramatically flat quality in emotional crescendos contributing to a narrative that sweats to lurch forward in fits and starts.

Stunning moment

Not that the actors don't try. Samonte may offer the strongest name, but this a Aguilar play through and through. Her part is, in fact, unfortunate...for long stretches she is stranded dead center on the stage, required to sustain the "crazy" mode while the other actors perform their respective dramatic scenarios.

But Aguilar is fascinating to watch precisely because of the intelligent, disciplined gifts she brings to the role. Even her most frenzied moments are informed by a natural, empathetic touch, which makes her character's descent less than pitiful.

Physically Samonte is perfect as hers—attractive, lithe, fat blonde skin beautiful to behold. He loses some heft, however, whenever he speaks with his shrieker voice. And when agitated, his face tend to come out indistinct.

Of the supporting cast, Paolo D'Hiro as the unsupervised journalist Godo delivers a full-bodied portrayal of an essentially decent man swimming in anger and helplessness. Dinah Sagalis, Cinqui Sison Bustos and Rowena D'Hiro also make their presence felt.

"Ang Mga Huwad" has one stunning moment that came where four generations of Amparos—Rora, his son, his dead father and grandfather—all converge by the sailboard mast, the three forebears extending their hand to the boy as a train candles nearby.

Death and eternity, pain and forgiveness, the need to reconnect with and be sacrificed, and by the grace of our past—all are distilled in that one eloquent tableau.

Most of the rest, alas, are static exercises—"sakuluang at ere," as it says.

"The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)" is on its last weekend, Feb. 23-25, at CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino. Call 8323861 or 8321125 local 3626/3621.

E-mail the author at gmail@inquirer.com.ph, visit www.gilbcastle.com

LAUNCH Guillen (second from right) with Arnold Reyes, Isa Feiro and Ron Capinding in Tanghalang Ateneo's "The Glass Menagerie." Lotlc Kalila Aguilar in Tanghalang Pilipino's "The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)"

BODY Nora, Muiko Kanagawa and Joel Lereta in "Philippine Bedtime Stories," a Philippines-Japan col

'Philippine Bedtime Stories' at

THE BOKKO-GUN THEATER COMPANY of Tokyo and the Cultural Center of the Philippines present the Philippine premiere of "Philippine Bedtime Stories" on Feb. 23, 8 p.m.; Feb. 24, 2 and 8 p.m., and on Feb. 25 at 2 p.m. at the CCP Tanghalang Ruben Severino Theater.

"Philippine Bedtime Stories" is a Philippines-Japan collaborative stage production supported by The Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM), Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, Shoug Arts Foundation and The Saison Foundation.

Directed by Yoshihisa Kishida, "Philippine Bedtime Stories" is a collection of five contemporary theatrical vignettes staged in the bedroom. They are "Walang Sawang" by Rene Villanueva; "Isang Libong Kuto para sa Gilbalit ni Ogling" by Lualhe Bacay; "Ang Unang Asawang" by Rody Vera; "Single Brown Female" by Joel Victor Torres; and "Ugnayan sa Isang Pinoy Bar" by Japanese playwright Hisashiko Ichida. All plays will be performed in Tagalog and Japanese, with subtitles in English.

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February 27, 2007 *Tuesday 8:00 AM*
Br. Benedict Golf Tournament
Canlubang Golf & Country Club

March 03, 2007 *Saturday 4:00 PM*
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Lloyd Webber's 'Song and Da

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S "SOM and Dance" continues at Dulinao in Greenhill 2—a production of Repertory Philippines and the City of Makati.

"Song and Dance" stars Cafa Gaerlan-Lebrilla as Emma Marshall and Peter Abaya.

John Gonzalez sets, Monbee Bagsit's lights, Bobbie Carreon's graphics, and the music played by Indoy Echavarria and the RWP String Ensemble complete the production.

"Rep has always tried to bring its audiences something different in the season and this is very different," says Joy Virata, Rep's associate artistic director and director of "Song and Dance." "We've also tried to bring Broadway to Manila for those who cannot afford to go to Broadway—and hopefully for those who can but enjoy seeing homegrown talent as well.

Translating thoughts, overlapping realities

Tanghalang Pilipino's 'Ang Mga Huwad' proves that a novel of thoughts can come alive on stage

By Shirley B. Lua
Contributor

ROMANCE. Sarmenia, Kalbo Apolloe and Nyeko. Coming in "The Pretenders (Ang Mga Huwad)."

NATIONAL ARTIST F. SIONIL JOSE'S "THE Pretenders" is a novel of thoughts and reflection. Considerable parts of the narrative dwell on the internal conflicts of narrator "Tony" Samson, the character struggling to uphold his dreams and ideals in a society governed by hypocrisy and cynicism, and closed by grief and self-torment.

And she lived she'd never realized for what it is. Yet unlike most who are blind to it, who do not recognize it or who loathe it or just ride the social tides, as part of being lonely... Thus, transforming the language of the novel into that of theater seems a daunting task.

Tanghalang Pilipino's production of "Ang Mga Huwad," directed by Chris Millado, proves that a novel (although one some devout angst finds "dry, why, hey, eloquent) may other than quicker" live" for two with of play: "Babae") and "Mga" the Tanghalang Pilipino—has skillfully transformed "The Pretenders" into "Ang Mga Huwad," approximating the plot structure of the novel.

The adaptation echoes the thematic concerns of José's novel's reminding us that the issues and problems of society today are symptomatic of our country's troubled history.

In "Ang Mga Huwad," the characters' thoughts are externally manifested into dialogues, actions and juxtapositions for instance, in the beginning of the play, the scene depicting Tony Samson's visit to his father in the penitentiary parallels that of his wife Carmen visiting his dictator father his death. On stage, the two scenes are juxtaposed in two places, representing different levels of reality.

And the levels of reality interact with one another. Carmen bristles at Tony's late reading and tries to incorporate into her imagined discussion to address Samson, who passes in the courtroom with his father, to throw her a reminder. The conversation is often used as theater to indicate "memory reinforcement."

Indeed, the play's juxtapositions lies in the shifting in perspective of scenes. A scene shown in the past reflects and contrasts to one played later to another with characters. Enough signs are established for the audience to join the shifts (e.g., four dancers swaying to the tracks and "waves" the theme of the Martial Law).

One successful manner of juxtaposition between mothers in a heart-rending scene by wife's infidelity, the monologue (voices) and overlaps with that of Carmen's reminiscence of times when surviving in the Philippine Embassy in Washington. Single rendered, this heartening play of voices effectively suggests an ironic subtext.

In a few instances, though, a juxtaposition may appear a bit overdone. The scene showing Samson's visit to Jury in Cabagnow, Negros Occ., interspersed with that of Carmen's encounter of Samson's aunt has voices Cabagnow, Ilocos.

Those two scenes are symbolically interwoven. Samson's reclaiming of his roots links to his acknowledgement of his offspring. However, as overlapping and overarching two equally intense scenes, the emotional impact of each scene tends to diminish, and the climax of recovering a poignant moment is subdued.

Memorable and moving

Those growing up in the '70s could hardly remember the child actor who played Noping in the telenovela "Gabing ng Hiraf"—Bernard Bonnin.

In the role of Tony Samson, Bonnin delivers a memorable and moving performance

laboratory stage production

CCP

...dies in English.

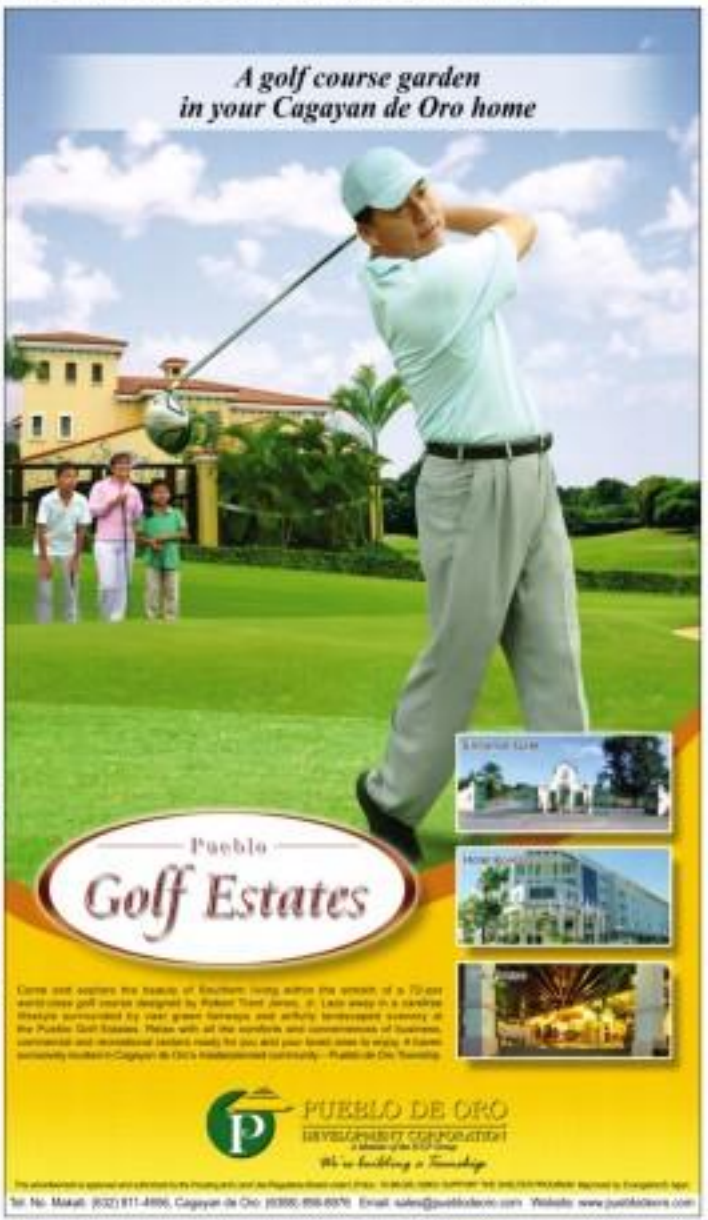
The Filipino cast includes Nora Mueller, Rayo Bagatsing, Angeli Bayani, Joji Lorenzo and Mae Lo-ico. They will be joined by ...ng with Japanese actors Yuzo Ishiyamato, Akiri Tsukayama, Kimiyo Kawanishi, Yosuke Asanuma, Tetsuhiro Wakai and Midoriko Sugiyama. "Rambutan is by Ishiyuni Chiaki and Sakamoto Ayuma. Ishiyukuro provides the artistic direction.

CCP (632) 832-1125, 832-1126 or 832-1128.

...nce' from Rep

"Song and Dance," with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Don Black, the performances on Wednesday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 3:30 p.m., until March 4.

Tickets are at P900, P700 and P500, available at the gate, at the Rep office at 12 A Building, C. Lawton Plaza, 2240 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati, and at all Ticketworld outlets. Call 8978728 or 8184888.



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32 years of the Bamboo Organ Festival

By Amada Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

"YOU MAY NEVER HEAR THIS KIND OF music again, or leave not in the Philippines."

This was the natural lifetime at media persons by concert pianist Delfin C. Rosa in a press conference announcing the 32nd Presentation of Bamboo Pipe Organ.

This unique festival, which usually showcases baroque music, will run on Feb. 22-March 1 at St. Joseph's Church in Las Piñas City, Metro Manila, home of the famous bamboo organ, which is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world.

Rosa is the artistic director of the festival. Other resource persons during the press conference were Msgr. Albert A. Votto, president of the Bamboo Organ Foundation, and concert organist Fernando Galarosa.

"We will be playing baroque music in contemporary way, in unusual settings, "Rosa said. "For example, Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 is usually for a small orchestra but we will be playing it as transcribed [by M. Reger] for the piano, and for four hands."

The Bach masterpiece will be interpreted by pianists Anamonia C. de Guzman and Ralph Israel.

Another major piece in Bach's Cantata No. 12, with Galarosa at the organ, Sr. Guzman and Israel at the piano, guitarists Efrén L. Rosas and Sabra Reyes, soprano Lucelle Lopez, the celebrated Las Piñas Boys Choir, and the festival orchestra directed by Jonathan Velasco.

Feb. 26 will be "An Evening of Organ Music," with guest organist Guillen Mikkelsen of Minnesota.

It will not be all baroque music, however. On Feb. 28, there will be a "Concert Under the Trees," which is now becoming a traditional feature. It will feature jazz music as dished out by Mon J. Puno, Jamal Mapun, Rita Tantoco Ongpin and Christine Lee Mercado.

"Fiesta Manila" on Feb. 27 will be devoted to the music of National Artist Lucio D. San Pedro, including famous songs like "Sa Ugoy ng Duyan," "Mutya Bowa and "Kwentas." The latest of the concert organist Galarosa, the tenor Randy Lopez, tenor Mobil Catolos, pianist Ismael, and the Las Piñas Boys Choir.

The festival closes March 1 with an ode to St. Cecilia, the traditional patroness of music.

During the presscon, Galarosa confirmed that the baroque organ of the Las Piñas church was the only one of its kind in the world. Confusions in Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan invited replicate this, the organist said, but their failed.

The organ has a total of 1,031 pipes, of which 882 are bamboo; the rest are metal.

Yet the second reason is that is the bamboo organ, are count your thanks to Fr. Diego Arce, who took eight years to complete the organ, from 1818 to 1824.

Incidentally or not, another parish priest of the Las Piñas church in 1858-1859, when the town was ruled by native dissidents is Fr. Rafael Moreno, an Augustinian, who was beatified in 1955 and canonized in 1993 by Pope John Paul II.

A whole new . . .

From page 23

uniqueness of the Filipino vendetta as a cultural heritage with a long tradition evolving from the Spanish and Latin American concepts and misdirection, which the vendetta has adapted to express a nationally specific consciousness.

The concert is part of the cultural season of the Silliman University Cultural Affairs Committee, to coincide with the ongoing National Arts Month.

Tickets are available at the College of Performing Arts, the Luce Auditorium and at the theater lobby before the show. Season passes are honored. Call (035) 4120000 loc 530.

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LIFESTYLE

Romanian violinist's tribute to Redentor Romero

TOMESCU plays before the grave of Redentor Romero. Beside him is Lina Rocha Romero's cousin.

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

MANY YEARS BACK AT THE CULtural Center of the Philippines Main Theater, during a curtain call of "La Traviata" featuring an American Violetta and a Filipino Alfredo, the unexpected happened.

Shortly after the heroine cried, "O gioia," on a high B-flat and fell "lifeless" on the floor, dozens of "Bravo!" filled the air.

Then from the audience rose a bespectacled man in a plain shirt and dark pants. He dashed to the stage through the side seats and for details offered a bouquet of flowers to the diva.

In an era that must have startled the singer,

Alexandru Tomescu to perform in Manila, Negros and Nueva Ecija

the man fell on his knees and then proceeded to kiss the tip of the singer's floor-length attire—the way a religious devotee would initiate a religious icon's habiliments.

The man who pulled off that seemingly mindless act didn't happen to be a theater maniac. He was a writer of transparent acting out a literary passage from Dostoyevsky's "The Idiot," cited he happened to be the opera's translator and director.

He must have felt the singer transcended

ROMANIAN, B4

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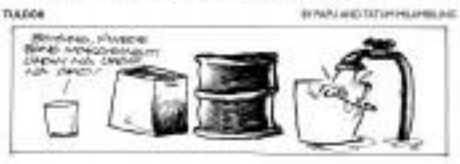
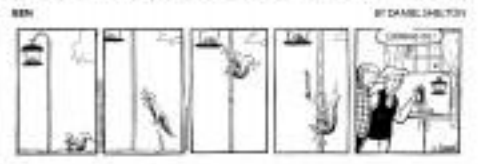
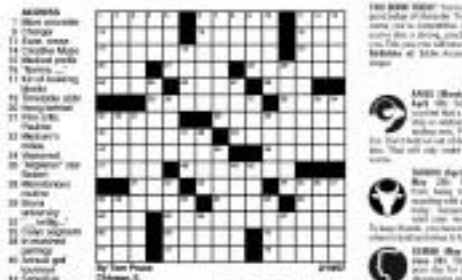


BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON



DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

9		8				7		4
			3	7	5			
7				4				5
	2	7				3	5	
			2		9			
	8	9				1	4	
2				3				7
			1	2	6			
1		3				2		8

Difficulty Level ★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	9	6	2	4	5	3	1	7
1	4	3	6	9	7	2	5	9
2	7	5	3	1	9	8	6	4
3	2	4	5	9	8	1	7	6
6	8	7	1	2	6	4	9	3
9	1	6	7	3	4	9	2	5
4	5	9	8	7	2	6	3	1
7	3	2	9	6	1	5	4	8
5	6	1	4	5	3	7	8	2

Good books, good life

HERE ARE SOME TITLES available at Fully Booked.

'French Women for All Seasons: A Year of Secrets, Recipes & Pleasure'

By Mireille Guiliano

This buoyant new book, bringing readers another Mireille Guiliano's tips and tricks for living with pleasure and style, runs the entire weight. Here are four full seasons of strategies for shopping, cooking and moving throughout the year, applying the French women's ideal of balancing pleasure and practicality.

Lose Weight! Get Laid! Find God

By Bo de

This is a guide to all the essential stages of life, one year at a time from 0 to 100, along with full-color tips that will ensure each year of your existence makes an indelible impression. Examples: at age 15, Bebol agonizes excessively. Procreates at age 20, and right in the flab at 40.

From your birth to your middle crisis, from losing your virginity to diminishing your grandchildren, the book will tell you how to lead a life hysterical life you excitedly deserve.

Two Lipsticks and a Lover

By Helena Frith Powell

Travel and lifestyle journalist Helena Frith Powell goes behind the scenes to investigate the infamous French adage: "Je ne sais quoi".

Talking to fashion gurus, beauty experts and it folks, professional seducers, lingerie designers and personal shoppers, she discovers a whole new world of indispensable wardrobe and beauty secrets, shopping destinations and way and exercise routines promising lasting success, family life, relationships and clandestine affairs.

The Year of Eating Dangerously

By Tom Parker Bowles

"The Year of Eating Dangerously" is an account of Tom Parker Bowles's global odyssey in search of culinary sustenance. He sets out to discover the most exotic food from around the world, from the delights of Peru, gastronomy shows and the French song-birds that are the ultimate in endangered gastronomy to the Maori warriors and their bloody feasts. "The Year of Eating Dangerously" is a delicious tale by a writer, extremely funny and often provocative road that will make your mouth water, at least most of the time.

Fully Booked has branches in Power Plant Mall, Rockwell (tel. 7666881); The Promenade, Greenhills (7214757); Gateway Mall (5114968); The Block, SM North (4424337); A/S Bacnotan, Makati (8151901); and SM Mall of Asia (5360264). Visit www.fullybookedonline.com

Dream theme weddings

WILL IT BE A CLASSIC Filipiniana affair with shades of white, ecru and mother-of-pearl? Are you an elegant Renaissance celebration in royal, mocha and silver?

How about an al fresco feast in champagne, lime and plum, or a chic city party in hip shades of canary yellow, pool blue and ochre?

Choose your hues, and make your wedding truly yours...get hundreds of tips, ideas and all the help you need from the Glendora new issue of Metro Weddings, the comprehensive, twice-yearly bridal bible from 888-CBN Publishing.

Lovely bride Nicole Schulze shares her love story with husband, Jamie Lopez in this issue that's packed with over 50 wedding gown ideas, a listing of the perfect garden, hotel and clubhouse reception venues, and how-to's for having your perfect wedding and staying within budget. Also featured is Monique Lhuillier's 2007 bridal collection. There's also a sectional supplier directory.

Metro Weddings January-June 2007 issue is available nationwide.

Focus on kite-boarding

THE NEW ISSUE OF METROACTIVE, the adventure, travel and extreme sports magazine features today's hot sport—kite-boarding.

Other features: swim-by-the-sea with hammerheads in the Cocos Hicos island of Goose; defy your fear of heights and fly for the very first time in the luxury of planes; scale Mt. Ellinangan and conquer one of the seven fantastic and go behind the scenes of "The Amazing Race Asia."

Metro Active's first quarter issue is available in newsstands nationwide. Call 4152273 local 4665.

February book picks

THIS MONTH, THE POWER Book club focuses on two gripping novels from J.K. Rowling's wildly successful seven-part series.

The hefty fifth installment, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," presents a uniquely psychological and intensely dark turn, as our boy wizard finds himself at odds with his own identity as well as with the relentless evil he's been prophesied to vanquish.

The Harry Potter saga continues with "Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince." After months of boredom and anticipation and cold speculation about the identity of the Half-Blood Prince, the fantastical bookdealers and incredible plot twists will leave readers as shocked and stunned as they are utterly satisfied. With only one book to go before the series' proposed conclusion, Rowling masterfully sets the stage for what will surely be an epic battle for the soul of all London.

Powerbooks specialty store invites readers to participate in an in-depth discussion of two of the most absorbing books ever penned. The Powerbook Club will meet on Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m., at Powerbooks Greenbelt 3. "Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix", and on Feb. 28, 6:30 p.m., at Powerbooks Megamall for "Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince."

Powerbooks Specialty Store is a complete one-stop bookstore with branches at Greenbelt 3 (tel. 7736408 to 25); SM Megamall (6352898 to 99); Alabang Town Center (8504662 to 63); Glorietta 3 (7827877); Shangri-La (6390000 ext 254, Robinson's (6233350/6242445); Trinoma (6344851); SM Mall of Asia (5360144); and Festival Supermall (8088221).

'High School Musical' opens Feb. 23

A GREAT WAY TO INTRODUCE KIDS TO the magic of theater is to bring them to watch the stage version of Disney's "High School Musical," which will run for two weekends from Feb. 23 to March 4, at the SM Megamall Cinema 4.

This is the officially licensed stage adaptation of Disney's wildly popular movie "High School Musical" and is making its Asian premiere here in Manila.

Popular teen stars Rayel Marquez heads the cast of 44, playing the female lead Gabriella Montez opposite Mark Alonzo who plays basketball jock Troy Bolton. The sister-and-brother team of Ryan and Maegan Evans is played by Jaime Saavedra (last seen as Bell in Sepertory Philippines' "The Sound of Music") and Yen Mendiola.

Presented by Blue Repertory in cooperation with Cebu-based producer Aurelio Go of Bravo Entertainment, Disney's "High School Musical" includes hit songs from the popular movie such as "Stricks Head to the Game," "We're all in This Together," "Stick to the Status Quo" and "Breaking Free."

Choir teacher/acting director, with Mio Infante as set designer and Johnny Reyes as lighting designer. Penny Cowan Academy's Dan Cabreza is choreographer and Isaschimea alumni Felix Rivera is musical director.

Call 4919999 or visit www.ticketworld.com.ph.

Romanian violinist's tribute to Redentor Romero

PIANIST Mary Anne Espina

all mortal expectations and she became a goddess fit for watching during the curtain-call.

The most was Rolando Tinio, our National artist for Theater and Literature.

Another supreme tribute to another artist that touched me was when the Romanian violinist Alexandru Tomescu visited the grave of the late conductor-violinist Redentor Romero.

Tomescu—who will be heard at the Philamlife Theater on Feb. 24 with pianist Mary Anne Espina—didn't just play on the grave. He also played Romero's favorite arrangement of Gounod's "Ave Maria" (Bach's "Ave Maria").

"It was the least I could do for him," said Tomescu, who added the Filipino conductor and impresario had introduced him to Filipino audiences in 1999.

Tomescu's next lessons in the summer of 1999 in Hatfield to play the opening concert of a violin competition. The designated conductor didn't show up and Romero proved the situation by leading the orchestra on human cues.

Recalled Tomescu: "Maestro Romero made music-making happen instantly and without effort. The musical transformation of the orchestra was unbelievable. All like we believe it would compare with the Vienna Philharmonic or the Berlin Philharmonic in the orchestra's first seven days."

Tomescu's great honors

Awards for women in media launched

TROPHY by Ivdoy Cadapan

THE WOMEN IN MEDIA projects of ST. Scholastica's College (SSC) will stage the first Kilalgayd Awards for Women in Media and Communication on March 5, at St. Cecilia's Hall of the SSC campus along Leon Guinto in Manila.

The award is named after Kilalgayd of Bingan, Geronimo, a 12th-century woman writer, poet, musician, artist, environmentalist and Renaissance woman whose counsel was sought by kings and popes.

The first batch of Kilalgayd awardees will receive trophy sculptures designed by the late Isidro Cadapan and cured by Federico Caccia.

The Ermita in her mind

"Myself, Elsewhere"
By Carmen Guerrero Nakpil
Nakpil Publishing, San Juan, 2006, 283 pages

By Rod S. De Vera

Carmen Guerrero Nakpil applies her undiminished powers to remembering her life and her beloved Manila district in this slender, superlative memoir

A STIRRING PORTRAIT OF the striking author dominates the cover of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's eighth book, the memoir "Myself, Elsewhere."

The image is a painting of Nakpil by the late National Artist Manuel Manansala done in 1969. One can almost feel the intensity and the intelligence blasting from the subject's eyes, though she is sitting still.

The intensity in the book itself rises like a fiery fount from the time before the patient's creation. A completely new work, "Myself" begins with her birth in 1932 and concludes in 1945 as Manila lay fallen. From the devastation of the Second World War to the vote that befell the city says Nakpil's recollection of her life and that of her ancestors, all told in crisp, clear and compelling prose, is rarely to be expected from the author of such books as "The Rice Conqueror" and "A Question of Identity." This is just the beginning, as "Myself" is intended to be just the first salvo in a trilogy that should chronicle Nakpil's eventful life.

Nakpil remembers with trademark gravity and perspective the war: "The destruction was of biblical proportions. Not a stone upon a stone was left. The few photographs in this book were donated by kind relatives and friends whose houses and memorabilia happened to be north of the Pasig, and unbeknownst that, more than food, drink and a roof, we needed our memories."

These photographs help immensely, but in truth, Nakpil's prose powerfully relegates the reader to the optimistic and open era from the 1920s to the '40s. She writes superbly and poetic from the first time, as she was growing up, and also from a far-see viewpoint for proper context. The distinctive life of time-tested recollects the book's narrative, making it both lucid and yet reflective, a gauntlet of the soul symphony if you may.

The book begins on an alluring note, with Nakpil writing about Ermita and her family's rise from as a prominent family of Ermitenos.

"I recite about my years in Ermita before World War II, not with the usual nostalgia, nostalgia weakness for the past, but in profound affection for what love time and place," she explains.

And what a place and time she remembers. "The thing about old Ermita is that it was an unplanned, quintessential, small town of the kind modern planners have been offering their clients as the optimum, urban unit," she writes. "Ermita could have taught them a thing or two. We were a social, economic and racial mix of people who happened to live together according to economic rules, in a compact township where everyone knew almost everyone else and anything we needed was just a stone's throw away. And we managed to be phenomenally petty."

Copious research

Combining copious research with firsthand knowledge, Nakpil unravels the history of both Ermita itself and her most impressive family tree. She writes about the pillars of Ermita life, property and religion, as well as chronicles her emerging Ermita and personality.

It was during the Guerreros' African sojourn that Nakpil "was acquired the habit of being outspoken, frank, candid, of blurting out my opinions without reservations or ill will."

She adroitly applies that candor to vivid profiles of her family and piercing observations of everyday life. Nakpil plunges full-bodied into questions of women's entitlement with upbeat excitement.

"Why did being Filipino include so much pain and suffering?" she asks. "It took me a long time to realize that all those displays of tough, parsimonious were meant to reawaken me against the abuse that fate all other Filipinos."

In a flipside to her unobstructed affection for personal families, Nakpil's most wrenching lines about World War II stand as a testament to the tragedies she suffered—the lost many loved ones, most notably her first husband, Tom Cruz, when she was just 22 and the Japanese war machine was rolling through Manila.

The pain is more evident in the book's poignantest last 6 months, which ends abruptly. Readers will absorb Nakpil's shock and awe at the swift finality of it all.

"I find it hard to write about WWII because, 60 years after the first bombing of Manila in January 1942, I have not yet risen it," she recalls. "At first, I took refuge in a willful blind of amnesia. Now, having spent more than half a century banishing all thought and remembrance of it, refusing to talk, read or write about it, I have succeeded so well that I can remember everyday generalities, everyday details about those years."

Through readers will have to wait to read the conclusion of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's autobiographical writing, "Myself, Elsewhere," by itself, it is a remarkable book that celebrates a time and place but but lamented, a volume that honestly and tenderly examines the chaos and the stories experienced by a remarkable woman.

Available in paperback at leading bookstores.

"CRUCIFIXION"

LIFESTYLE

"BALLROOM Dancing"

Foreign affairs

HENRI ETEVE
The Frenchman cometh

By Dinah B. Ma-ao
CONTRIBUTOR

FRENCHMAN HENRI Eteve is an artist whose imagination is as wide as the cosmos from which he gets most of his inspiration.

His "Sensibility theory" on spotlight at Archivo art Gallery in Pasay, dearly proves it.

The 65 art pieces in oxides (brass, he says) may very well be a personal homage to Manila—one he views your since living here in here "so the cradle of Peoples' here. It was a falling upon it."

Eteve, who has been based in Manila for the past 40 years, chose the name 'Dr Hebrew, or "for the better," as his pseudonym.

The reason for this, he says, is that he differentiates the artist and the work from the person. He believes that an artist can be a totally different person compared to who he is in reality.

Just as the name suggests, Eteve's versatility in his choice of art forms is a result of his subconscious roiling over.

The paintings, sculptures, tapestry and mixed-media works that make up most of the collection display his unencumbered imaginations.

Eteve made his way to the Philippines in a free soul. But his interest in art started quite early, while living close to the Louvre Musee nove Montmartre La Place du Tertre, where artists were living en masse since the beginning of the Impressionist movement.

He joined the French Foreign Legion and went over to the Algerian War, after fulfilling his obligation, found he could no longer re-adjust himself to civilian life. The war affected him very badly and the only solution for any one to find themselves were again, he says, surprisingly to travel.

"When you travel, you see many different things and your problems disappear," he says. "It's like re-newing yourself."

With just a backpack and a little money, he boarded a ship and travelled to the Middle East, passing by countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Jordan before finally settling in the Philippines.

THE FRENCHMAN E2

From Indonesia with love

An identity struggle and love for flowers and Jesus inspire Sasya Tranggono's art

By Pan Pazor

SASYA TRANGGONO HAS been into a bruised family preoccupied with beauty.

Her parents are behind one of Indonesia's leading cosmetics brands. But Sasya found another way to add beauty to the world—through her brush-strokes.

The Indonesian artist was invited by Ayala Museum to bring her works to the country and share them with Filipinos. She does, "From Indonesia with love," which runs until Feb. 25. However, yesterday that she says she's inspired "by flowers and Jesus."

Through paintings of brightly colored flowers, Sasya is able to convey humanity, intimacy, love, joy and even nonchalance.

Sasya says she is inspired by everything around her—"perfume, traveling, designers, even clothing."

Although born in Indonesia, Sasya also spent time in the Philippines, studying engineering in the United States and working for ADB-Asian Development Bank.

"I did not feel Indonesian then. I was always to study when I was barely 18 and I became almost whatever," she says.

But returning to Indonesia brought her back to her roots. "I am so Indonesian and it is awesome."

The identity struggle comes into play in her artwork as well. "The colors I use aren't colors that most Indonesian artists would use. I use bright colors, they like subdued tones. I paint flowers to

PHOTO E2

ILLUMINATED. Sasya says color is inspired by everything around her.

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Drilon's drawings and engagements

"INDIGO Girl" I

DRAWING IS ARTISTOMAT ACT OF ILLUMINATION: the small baby step in project representation onto blank space, the tool which defines the images en zone. Drawing denotes both verb (in the act of **making contacts with lines**) and noun (in the subsequent image produced), the entire world encompassing process and output, visual and object alike.

"Blessed Drawings by Black Drilon" similarly straddles such dichotomies: the images signifying not only the finished products but the continuing act of artistic engagement as well. The show itself comprises the first half of Drilon's two-part show at blog inn Pasco che latter being an exhibition of the artist's recent abstract paintings. Drilon attempts to recover the distinct artistic operations of drawing and painting by blowing at base each complements the other's representational value.

Produced over a period of two years, the drawings are produced not as separate works disjointed from the personal, psychological and philosophical aspects of the artist's life, but **rather as visual excursions of it. Far from being** academic exercises in technical fluency with pencil or charcoal on paper, a substantial portion of Drilon's drawings are culled from his **daily chronicles in personal notebooks and are** created in between bouts of writing, poetry, and recollections.

Drilon reworks the sketches simultaneously recalibrating past representations and adding or subtracting to the images as the flow and ebb of energy drives him to do.

At the artist asserts, in the end, the drawing **reveals itself and more often than not he finds** himself in the "implementer" of a previously unforeseen design.

Hanging the works inside the gallery also employs a similar process of linear meanderings. The works are arranged horizontally, side by side, and subtextually having line that extends beyond the gallery's conventional space and into the frothing bottle.

Also seen in the show are Drilon's tutorial explorations into how abstraction may denote the figurative the human figure, its textures.

Produced amid such circumstances, the **drawings speak of entanglements, layerings,** and unwindings as if to represent a collective process of construction. They create structures that connect the room and the past as "Drawn" **supernova is, entrancing and refusing** packs to assist their eventual resolution.

"Drawn Drawings" runs Feb. 20-March 13 at Magnet Gallery Pasco, Pasco de Roxas and Ordonez Jr., Makati City. Call 8177893. (Drawings at http://www.magnet.com.ph)

"INDIGO Girl" 2

Rodel Tapaya's sure touch of technique

"UNTITLED"

"SATOW"

By Consuentino C. Tajara

RODEL TAPAYA IS ONE OF our few young artists who consistently show a sure touch of technique even in their stylistic youth. His style and technique may change in time, but with every transformation the assurance of touch remains.

We see this in his latest exhibit "Mapagal," 15 pieces in ink and acrylic on paper, until March 3 in The Drawing Room, Meritime Building, 3/F Metropolitan Ave., Makati City.

The series of images, says the exhibition note, depicts characters, scenes and various narratives. But **these are mainly portraits rendered** in broad lines (not thin washes) with muted colors (shades blue, olive green, yellow-ocher, umber, blue-green, ink-blue, a lot of black and the collusive of exposed paper).

In some of these line drawings, we still feel the artist's signature gold (which he associates with technology and modern civilization), as in the exhibit piece "Nag Paglubog ng Bituing Makulit" and the haunting "Satow."

But in all he has abandoned his Disneyfied-style primitivist rendering of the human form. Instead of those shadowy figures that look like he chooses images from cave paintings, we now have hard-edged figuration, expressive lines, sharply de-

"PITANG"

fined patterns.

With a simple squinting of the eyes, peering of line or half opening of the mouth, the artist manages to **coax a lot of facial expressions** from his subjects. He underscores these nuances of emotions with discursive strokes and coloration, then underlines everything with patterns that used, dash, cross or punctuate.

We see this in pieces such as "Viktor Frampers," "Untitled," "Pitang." If you're distracted enough by the patterns, you'd miss seeing the details that reveal Tapaya's growth as a figurist in on Pitang has dirty hands.

The artist has even imbued some of these portraits with mystery. What has the woman in the piece called "Untitled" on her head? Is she a peddler of balarao, or a fish vendor? And is Satow a cross-dresser? (Now, that's **even interpretation...but it does en**rich the art, doesn't it?)

The exhibit note elaborates on the concept of the whole exhibit: **"Here the artist not only explores** the spontaneous and reflective **characteristics of drawing but also** offers a fresh way of depicting character **actors and the roles they are play**ing. Figure-and-ground relationship is shown in the play of paper and mediums while mapping and finding meanings in a connect lists of **an awakened images."**

That sounds too academic for these simple images. But for his youth (he's in his mid-20s), set at less the artist such indulgence.

Beyond any interpretation, however, these look like **one-piece**es—no longer studies but finished products.

Tapaya, a Fine Arts graduate **from University of the Philippines**, who took up further art studies in Helsinki and Sem Stadt, is one of our least hyped artists. He should come **to our more. He has depth of talent, and** the technical skill and visual flair to commit those to canvas.

"VIKTOR Frampers"

Cesare A.X. Syjuco and the New Formalism

By Angelo V. Suarez
Contributor

WITH THE STENCH OF THE GREAT New Critical corpse still hanging in the literary air, it has become almost an insult to brand anyone a formalist these days, what with the old formalism's emphasis on the so-called closed system of the literary "work" (in opposition to Roland Barthes' open literary "texts") and debilitating delusion of organic unity—poetry's acceptance of apparent completeness unto itself, denying any contextual relations to cultural and historical materiality.

But with the fresh air provided by "Mighty Big Unoriginal," **the first of a series of small**-scale exhibits run up as installations of "visual and literary hybrids," Cesare A.X. Syjuco doesn't seem to give a damn what he's brand-ofi-ourselves.

And to intensify so, he re-visited his **metaphor** it isn't merely the house artist's head or risk here. The webs-mind headstand **as adding different conditions** in once is done also by the body-language of its viewers/readers, unveiling participants who themselves become persons in these 30 private nooks, quite literally exploring a book bound by multi-author then paper or cotton, themselves read as part of the show by more and more passersby.

Serrading, seriousness

By the gallery's entrance, one is greeted by the declaration "You have consented here," as if by coming to the show s/he has entered a **new life, a new sensual beginning...followed** by the instructions "Please excuse the inconvenience! Please don't struggle! Please decompose at you're told," forewarning the audience of their infestation and consequent participation, urging them into performances, penetrating the cold defenses of and disturbing **conclusion** readership accustomed to being spoon-fed with bland and passive insight.

And certainly there is no passivity here. The show, after all, entails engagement, for to read Syjuco's texts is to take view them, participating the abstraction of discursive language against the concrete experience of the image—a showcase of the creative potency of typeface when taken for more than mere sanserif design: typography as the service of signification, the medium becoming the (other) message.

The use of transparent glass not only allows both sides of the page to be read and viewed at once, but allows the other pages...the walls behind the glass...essential visibility from any single standpoint. Imagine **being able to read page 11 of a translated book** while you're still on page 6.

One may also view our own three-dimensional to another, without any gloss other than those formulated by chance or by the viewer.

A form of reading, a reading of form

Tension between the verbal and the visual, the two-way penetrability of glass, death and shadows and resurrection...the mental challenge and reflection is made most palpable by mini-walls and lighted panes depicting pieces occupying two walls at a 90-degree angle within the gallery.

Each airplane is based with its dropped panties, both pushed over their own reflections, printed in what seem to be bloody dots like those famously employed exaggeratedly in Lichtenstein's popular comic-style art.

But these dots aren't so much culled from old comics as the scary forms of more recent hobby toys, of plastic tanks and models/planes putting to be assembled by the enthusiastic hobbyist.

But the implications go beyond the banal

Visual Arts

Making cartoons at Philamlife

Marvin Mabuyo hosts a two-session workshop on making comic strips for students in the Philamlife community. This week inspiration from the late '80s to the '00s can be expected in the exhibit, "The Forgotten Building: A Queer Architecture," from curators Jeff Luna (Act. with Other Selves) and Philamlife as co-presenters and Ayala Foundation as organizer. The exhibit opens on Feb. 22, 4 p.m., at the lobby of the Philamlife Building on Ermita (Manila). It runs until March 20.

Art groups' forum

The following artists' Manuel and Maria and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts invite all visual artists, groups, artists, art students and art enthusiasts to join the forum, "Tension in Three," Feb. 23, from 2:30-6 p.m., at the RCT Liquor Building. It features the executive leadership team of the Philippine Visual Arts Events Organizing Association (PVAEOA), Alliance of Visual Arts Organizations, Ateneo Art Gallery, Bulwagan ng Sining Makati, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Lopez Memorial Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Museo Pambata, Museum of Contemporary Arts and Design, Museum of Philippine Art, Museum of Philippine Costume, Museum of Philippine Political History, Museum of Philippine Social History, Museum of Philippine Traditional Textiles, Museum of Philippine Visual Arts, Museum of Philippine Visual Arts, Museum of Philippine Visual Arts

Go! Go! Mariano!

These are rubbercut prints that remind one of childhood

By Marvin Morabe
Contributor

"GO! GO! Robots!"

RUBBER HOSE IS FRUITBEARING, pioneer Mariano Ching's exhibit of rubbercut prints at 1×0 Gallery in Serendra, Bonifacio Global City Taguig, showcasing 11 rubbercut prints done by the artist over a period of four years.

At first glance, one is reminded of the retro movie posters of Hollywood films in the '50s and '60s—pure fantasy, but replete with the innocent wonder of a pre-teen with adventurous do of the period. The images look terrifying, with the prerequisite blank, wide-eyed expressions of the aliens, but one is reassured that in the end the human race will prevail against all odds.

The print titled "Go! Go! Robots!!" evokes all the power and zeal of a Flight Master like Zeus. Rendered in red, the character in superhero stance is ready to defend the universe against all real obstacles.

"House," on the other hand, is a take on space and its loneliness, emptiness and vastness. "We see a dog in a space capsule drifting endlessly.

In another print, we see a green alien of cheese-like characteristics harnessing some magical spell on a small, young boy. Could this boy be the next master of the universe?

Then, "A Boy Named Guevara" again tells us the old saga of good vs. evil. In this collection of prints, good still widely triumphs!

Ching has long been fascinated with the "printing" process. Coupled with this is his fondness for books and his preoccupation with sci-fi designs. The theme may be juvenile (I would rather say "child-like"), but the result is a textured, composed, mark-laden effort.

"THE INVALIDS"

Ching says he likes rubbercut printmaking another because of its practicality—and his love for comics; he likes the bold colors and strong lines. Rubbercut prints can be made in bonus, as used for a printing press.

Asked if he purposely chose the colors of the Philippine flag, he replies: "Yun lang kasi ang nakita kong."

For the humors, yes, as printmaking artists are the same ink as that used by printing presses. So, no room here for subdued, earth colors or Heather Stewart's palette. You get Cinderellas, McDo yellows and Jollibee red.

Ching is a product of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts. He had further studies at Kyoto University in Japan. He has exhibited here and abroad and sometimes himself a full-time printmaker and painter.

He shrugs off the common notion that printmaking is less of an art as compared to painting, but insists that maybe people have not just come to appreciate the artform.

"Marami ang nagmamahal sobrang ang printmaking sa painting. Unico with original painting po ito, pero handmade din naman ang prints eh." (A lot of people are saying that printmaking is inferior to painting. They still like an original painting, but prints are also handmade.)

It is a pleasant thing once in a while to come across works that transport us to a different time and place, combining us through that journey with images we know all too well, reminding us of the past when life was simpler, when school shootings, kidnappings and terrorism were unheard of. When we gleefully read and took in sci-fi and the possibility of alien invasions, and when we were spooked by cute-eyed aliens, evil machines, organ-transplanting space executives.

Bid Ching again. Here's "Mariano," the only piece with the only human being in it. It's reminiscent of the pop-rock posters of the '60s and '70s. I can almost hear my sister cry: "It's David Cassidy!"

"Rubber Hose" is a collaboration between 1×0 Gallery and CPG Gallery. Call 9631172.

"UNITYLED"

Mario Parial's thankful art

By Lito B. Zulueta

"THREE Horses"

"ANIMAS Festival"

"BLESSINGS II"

DESPITE THE SEEMINGLY BARE divas spun of his paintings, they playful jest, there's nothing forsaken about "Parialesque Blessings." Mario Parial's newest show of 25 works in acrylic on canvas and on paper at Artside Raphael of Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

The works, generically described as along the nude style, are not the products of naivete. As a former art professor at the University of Santo Tomas and University of the Philippines, Parial is anything but unsophisticated and unlearned.

He tackles celebrated images in a non-cerebral fashion, but the intelligence is unmistakable. He is an accomplished.

The concealment is done as a sort of subject and a connector that seems to have been presented on the dignity of status. Parial has appropriated the spirit and images of folk painting, and his canvases have been distinguished by vivid, intimate hues and clean-cut stylistic design.

His figures are often set in carnivals and fiestas, and their mien is breathe the smothering air of their settings, as if every inch of space and every square of oxygen have been taken over by the horror of celebration.

Even his garter works, such as the Mother and Child figures, are cast in unconventional folk colors and hues. Perhaps because of his unabashed folk inclinations, the genre works assume a life of their own, revitalized in rebirth, rare way.

His Marian works, in fact, have been included in two international books on the subjects, along with works by Hockney, El Greco, De Vinci and Stallard.

The folk attitude that is the soul and spirit of fiestas and carnivals, at least as far as the Philippine setting goes, is thankspiring. And this attitude of gratitude permeates Parial's new exhibit.

Of course, Parial has a lot to be thankful for. After relating from the academe, he now full-time into painting and seems to have achieved a second coming in it.

Like Antonio Austria, an older contemporary at UST and also an art teacher for most of his life, Parial has achieved success in art with his bevy of admirers and collectors growing by the day.

Both are solid artists who, ironically, came from the stiff academy. But there's no set resemblance in their works, shared like a dullness and a trait.

The dullness is not dull-as-can or stupid. Parial is a master of his craft, and there's no empty-experimenting in his art. He has largely stuck to his guns despite the ins and outs of the art market. He has remained true to his artistic calling and style despite the vagaries of ethnic frenzy and cyclicity.

If he is reaping the blessings of a deserved success in stance, it's because he has conducted his artmaking with lyric "Verbalmanca." He is confident in art, but without the loud claims.

ENTERTAINMENT

Edee Rosete-G. Velarde

A dream close-up

BURBANK, CALIFORNIA—On Sunday (Monday in Manila), Ellen DeGeneres will make good on a six-year-dream.

She's had her eye on hosting the Oscars since last year at the Kodak Awards in 2001.

"I thought, until this is fun ... I should do the biggest one of all," says the 49-year-old comedienne, who's busier and more tanned than she appears on TV. "I've been hoping that would ask me for probably six years now."

She finally got the invitation a few months ago and has been working nonstop ever since.

Crazy, nonstop

"The Ellen DeGeneres" weekday talk show sometimes is full weekends. The preparation here typically ran two at the studio at 11 a.m., within the monologue, pressure with producers for the day's guests, late hair and makeup, then taper the show. By the time she headed home to her brand new smoke gray Prosecco SUV before, it's just dinner time.

Lately, DeGeneres has doubled-up on late talk shows, taping two episodes a day. That was the one reason an Oscar for a full week before the awards and still have fresh shows upon which she's already.

"It's a lot of work—crazy, just nonstop," she says...but she's fueled by excitement. As a lifelong movie fan, she's "honored" to host Hollywood's biggest night. And as an entertainer, she's eager to take on one of the biggest challenges of her career.

"Some people pole-climb and some people skydive. I host the Oscars," says DeGeneres, sitting cross-legged on a chair by brown sofa at her NBC office. "It's thrilling ... and for many people on to something like this."

Inspirations

She spends nights and weekends working with her Oscar writers, but ideas percolate at all hours. The show's monologue came to her in the shower two months ago, she says.

"I wrote the entire thing," she says. "If you're in the shower, you're thinking, I'm not going to forget this joke. I'm not going to forget this joke.' So I'm writing it down in my head. I'm getting out, I'm drying off, I'm getting dressed, I'm brushing my teeth, I'm combing my hair, I'm putting on my makeup, I'm getting in the car, I'm driving to work, I'm sitting down at my desk, I'm writing it down. I've written the entire thing."

DeGeneres is inspired by this year's nominees, she says, and by past Oscar shows.

She does not have any childhood memories of the Academy Awards, though they were an annual event in her Louisiana home.

Based on previous hosting duties at the Emmys and Grammys, DeGeneres says she kind of knows what to expect." But stepping onto Oscar's stage offers its own high-profile challenges.

She says Chris Rock, who hosted the show in 2005, told her last week that the job is "scary as hell." But DeGeneres has a different perspective. "I can't wait to rock out and see all those fabulous faces."

She will not try to emulate any past Oscar host, she says, though she does have her favorites. "I always go back to Johnny Carson. He was just a classy guy and ... you [always] felt like you were in good hands." She's hoping that her positive attitude will spread a happy vibe through the Kodak Theater.

Historical

That warm approach to what makes her a perfect host, says Laura Dolan, producer of the 79th Academy Awards.

"She's just born to do this," Dolan says. "She's hysterically funny, she's unpretentious and she makes you feel great. She's going to own it and blow us away."

DeGeneres has seen all the nominated films and counts "Babel" and "Notes on a Scandal" among her favorites. She is telling jokes, protocol shows, but she still hopes for some last-minute surprises on Oscar night—like when Jack Palance did his one-armed push-ups, or the year a circulator crossed the stage, flashing a peace sign, among other things.

"I'm going to make something horrible happen," she says with a glint in her light blue eyes. "Nice like in a bad thing for anybody but I think something should happen." AP

Trick or treat?

DANIEL "HARRY POTTER" RADCLIFFE MAKES ALL IN THE WEST END REVIVAL OF Peter Shaffer's play "Equus," opening Feb. 27 at the Gielgud Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue, London.

Rebuffs "I" unveils "Ill-tempted or sleep-stalk rebel playing Alan Strang, a psychotic patient who blinds six horses with a metal spike after a disturbing sexual experience.

The young actor's full-frontal nude scene has been dubbed the "ten-inch" by the London press. Director of Photos Brizz, the studio behind the film versions of J. K. Rowling's books, was disappointed.

"We've now been building up ... publicity for Harry's fans—[who—to see him in the next Potter film,] 'Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix'—coming out this summer," a Photos spokesperson quoted to have said. "We've been forced to cut pixels out of the scene for this."

Kamikazee leads 2nd MYX Awards nominees; 12 nods

ROCK GROUP KAMIKAZEE LEADS THE nominees for the 2007 MYX Music Awards with 12 nods, including double nominations in the major categories Favorite Song and Music Video.

The band is trailed by Spongecola and Sandwich, which got six nominations each.

In other categories, new performers like Christian Bautista, Rob Sinsuat, Mafe, Hiraya Jacosalem and Rocksteddi are competing against veteran performers including Gary V, Francis M, Michael V, Freddie Aguilar, Bituin Escalante and Regine Velasquez.

Three hip personalities Cornelio Barawid, Chin Chin Gutierrez, Pinky Poquiz, Rico Rivadeo and Kiko Matsuura are also in the running for Favorite Guest Appearance in a Musical Video.

The winners will be chosen by via SMS. Tune in to MYX on Skyable Silver and Gold Channel 21 for details and updates.

Tickets cost 500 since per category per day until March 10.

The awards ceremonies will be held at the MF Theater on March 10.

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1 GHOST RIDER • TKE
2 GHOST RIDER
3 indieFilms: ROME and JULIET
4 National Arts Month: PELIKUSINA
5 MUSIC and LYRICS
6 THE HOLIDAY
7 THE FOUNTAIN
8 THE PROMISE
9 MUSIC and LYRICS
10 TROIKA

ERMITA

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE HOLIDAY
HANNIBAL RISING
3 MUSIC and LYRICS
4 TROIKA
5 THE PROMISE
6 THE MESSENGERS
7 THE FOUNTAIN

METRO EAST

1 GHOST RIDER
2 MUSIC and LYRICS
3 THE PROMISE
4 GHOST RIDER
5 THE HOLIDAY
HANNIBAL RISING
6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
APOCALYPTO
7 THE MESSENGERS
8 TROIKA

NOVALICHES

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 TROIKA
4 MUSIC and LYRICS
5 THE MESSENGERS

PIONEER

1 MUSIC and LYRICS
2 GHOST RIDER
3 THE PROMISE
4 THE FOUNTAIN

STA. ROSA

1 APOCALYPTO
2 GHOST RIDER
3 CHARLOTTE's WEB
4 THE PROMISE

LIPA

1 THE PROMISE
2 HANNIBAL RISING
3 The CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

DASMARINAS

1 THE MESSENGERS
2 GHOST RIDER
3 TROIKA
4 THE PROMISE

ANGELES

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 MUSIC and LYRICS

IMUS

1 THE MESSENGERS
2 THE PROMISE
3 MUSIC and LYRICS
4 GHOST RIDER
5 TROIKA
6 THE CLEANER

STARMILLS

1 THE CLEANER
2 THE PROMISE
3 MUSIC and LYRICS
4 THE HOLIDAY
5 GHOST RIDER
6 THE MESSENGERS

BACOLOD

1 GHOST RIDER
2 indieFilms: COMPOUND
3 BABEL
4 THE PROMISE
5 THE CLEANER
6 CHARLOTTE's WEB

ILOILO

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 BABEL
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
5 THE HOLIDAY
6 THE CLEANER

SUSANA on her music studio in Las Piñas

'70s headliner gladly gives up the spotlight

By Reynerd San Diego Jr.
Photos by Jess Pineda

Susana Pichay is happy teaching young & promising singing artists

SCRIBBLES ON THE WHITE board in Susana Pichay's office are her daily appointments: barely sentence-with some students four days begin at 9 a.m. and end at 9 p.m.

"Sometimes I work until 10 p.m.," she says. "It's no hassle, since my home is near the studio."

She notes that teaching a new generation of singers is not work for her, it's her joy.

Watching her students emerge gives her the ultimate high, Susana says. And when they become professional ... "That's the best compliment," she says. "(And) the best reward is to see them make it in the top."

Graduates

Among her graduates are Jaya, Princess Peters, Mimi Taylor, "Starstruck" winner Jennylyn Mercado, "Pop Star Kids" finalist Boiyo Almazo and Talent Olympics champ Kim Flores.

She describes her job: "I (divert) my students' overall development as singers. Apart from voice training, I also take care of their wardrobe and grooming."

She instructs them what to eat. "Chocolates, mangoes, anything sweet" are a no-no. "They should also avoid chicken skin and other fatty foods. They should watch their weight and take care of their complexions."

When they're onstage, the teacher sees to it "that their onstage movements are not too stiff or look too choreographed."

Prospective students go through the wringer.

"An audition process allows me to determine what type of singers they are—pop, rock, R&B or classical," she explains. Once the student's style is pegged, the teacher gets down to the brass tacks.

THE DIVA...circa 1994

THE TEACHER, today

Even hip-hop

"I ask students not to sing songs that they already know. I'd rather that they learned new, unfamiliar ones. I ask them to buy a their book where they can keep new music sheets."

The goal is to encourage every student to build his own repertoire.

"I've been teaching for over 20 years, but until now I am still studying new techniques and styles," Susana says. "My brother, who is based in the US, sends me the latest training tapes. I wanted to teach rap, so I studied hip-hop. I don't hold back; I share everything I know with my students—all the trade secrets!"

She confesses that she sometimes misses performing.

"I still get offers (for shows), but most of the time I am tied up with coaching," (She had a dinner show, called "Time Flight On Us," at the Shakultai Restaurant in Makati on Feb. 17.)

A champ

If she is a passionate teacher, it's probably because Susana was an equally successful singer in the 1970s.

A champion on "Bagong Kampeon," a TV talent search hosted by Red Sarmiento, she soon became a headliner in Manila's top nightspots, fiestas and fundraisers.

She earned P200 to P300 a night, she remembers.

Among her recorded songs that became hits were "Don't Ask Rick," "Lilok na Puy Ring" and "Nakakalaw Ako." She also

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recorded "Sliding Somersaults" as Tiga Aurus" from the musical "Undead."

The late great songstress George Canseco gave Santos two songs, "Rico" and "Bakit ay Pag-ibig." These Canseco ballads were used in the Lino Brocka movie "Bakit sa Dig-big," starring Rosa Rosal, Phillip Salvador and Hilda Koronel.

Santos also interpreted "Don't Provoke Friends," in entry to the 5th Metro Pop Music Festival in 1982.

Her comeback did she shared the concert stage with Nico J. Perez, Anthony Castelo, Dodo Mitchico and Dulce in Manila and toured the United States and Canada with the "Bella Ilesa" troupe led by Rosanne.

Full orchestra

Although she had performed abroad, her concert back in Democracy in Manila's Rustic Club, proved to be more memorable.

"Things were different then. Being a minor, our type was backboard of, I sang with a full orchestra. That's why I'm excited and nervous because Allyd with a stylist, musical arrangement by the best musical arrangers—Dominic Fernandez, Ryan Cayabyab, Amado Pagsanjan and Gerry Mallari."

Among the best-produced songs of her concert's were "New York, New York," "With One More Look at You," "Much Closely Now," the standards of Sammy Davis Jr. and other Broadway shows.

At a tribute to her uncle, she wanted an album of Roman folk songs like "Sorrento" and "Torna a Surriento."

Among her contemporaries, she has her hat to Leona de la Cruz, Miriam Perida and Rubie.

In her blood

Music is in her blood, she says, adding that all 10 of her brothers and sisters inherited her father Perfecto's talent for music.

"My dad was a renowned jazz pianist. My uncle Ben sang Spanish songs. My brothers Perdie Jr. is a drummer, four of my sisters are singers, too. Marie, Janis and Cherry were my back-up vocalists when I was still active. My other sister Maren is a singer-choreographer. My sister Cherry now teaches basic voice to my niece, the princess.

Now, her own daughter, nephews and nieces are showing interest in show business.

"My eldest Paula Stephanie sees inspiration like Angelica in her father Pilar's shows," she notes happily. "She had a memorable debut with her dad at the Music Museum last December."

These days, she has gladly turned over the stage to her daughter and students.

Last December, she initiated a concert for students in Los Pilitas, where the Susan Perkey Music Studio is located (El Resort Village).

"I have students as young as four years old. Some of the younger ones have started studying music with me. They are so apt from the time they were the parents for singing, they're welcome to sing at talks," she continues.

With the young Princess Peace in 1980

... with Jennylyn Mercado

... and with sisters Maren, Tonia and Cherry

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TRX

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G4	1 THE FOUNTAIN	2 GHOST RIDER	3 GHOST RIDER	
	4 THE HISTORY BOYS	5 THE MESSENGERS	6 MUSIC & LYRICS	7 THE PROMISE
GB1	1 GHOST RIDER		2 MUSIC & LYRICS	
GB3	1 GHOST RIDER		2 MUSIC & LYRICS	
	3 THE HISTORY BOYS	4 GHOST RIDER	5 THE FOUNTAIN	
ATC	1 GHOST RIDER		2 MUSIC & LYRICS	
	3 THE FOUNTAIN	4 THE HOLIDAY	5 THE PROMISE	
ACC	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 THE PROMISE	4 THE MESSENGERS
M2	1 THE PROMISE	2 THE FOUNTAIN		
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Puzzling & challenging experiment

By Oliver M. Palicaban Jr.

ACCLAIMED FILMMAKER DARREN ARONOFsky ("Requiem for a Dream") returns with the dramatic but patience-testing "The Fountain," a devastating love story capable of analyzing love and the attitudes of mortality among other things.

Darkly ponderous and existential, the film finely presents mortality in an artist who denies the way from experimentation, and who imbues his work with thought-provoking substance. It's also like an abstract painting: hard to get close and impossible to stop looking from.

It's immediately established, however, that two lovers are at the center of it. Tommy (Hugh Jackman), a self-assuming but reckless scientist, defiantly tries to stave off the impending death of his cancer-stricken wife Izzi (Rachel Weisz). Determining the regenerative properties of a previously undiscovered substance after he and his team assist it on ailing monkey, Tommy becomes optimistic that Izzi can be successfully healed, an outlook Izzi's notebook, which contains a story she's been writing, about the adventures of a Spanish conquistador captain, Tomas (alsoplayed by Jackman), Isabel (also, her name ended by the Queen (also played by Weisz) to go on a special quest.

Review

Mystical elements

It's not explained if Izzi's fictional story is based on actual accounts of a past life, but the hints she shares with her husband leads one to assume that these events, as well as the repeated mentions of symbolic and/or mystical elements like the Fountain of Youth and the Tree of Life, are no coincidence. But then, there's a third character played by Jackman, a bald, levitating being in a floating bubble who contemplates life, death and similarly heavy things. Who this guy is exactly, we're not directly told, but he pops up repeatedly with a puzzled story about related heartaches.

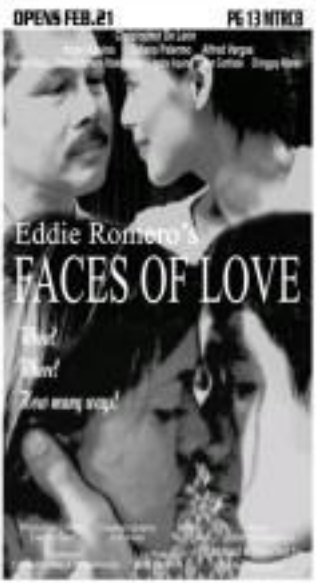
According to the movie's production information, that's fine, a 20th-century astronaut (yes, you read that right) who's trying to cope with the chaotic memories that have plagued him in the past. This character's retreat are accompanied by flashy, quickly spaced editors, which he perceives as the movie offers a third perspective that further questions the limits of mental relationships. It's hard to argue him as more than an imaginary figure in a visually trippy, dazzling entertainment.

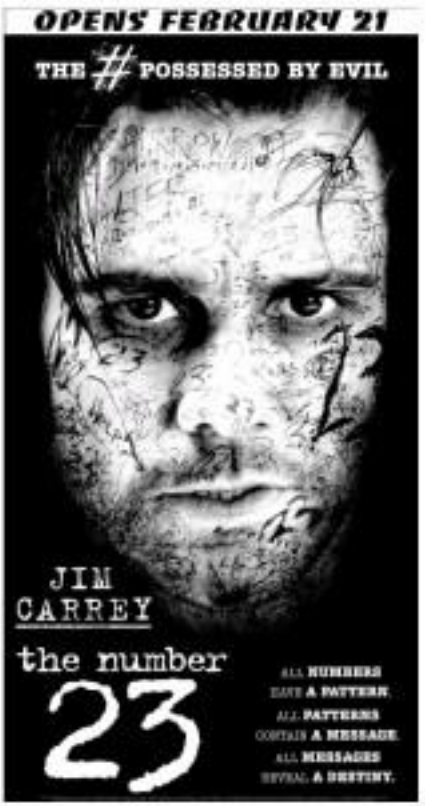
Had it been convincingly explained who this 24th century character was, it may have made him more valuable and less pretentious. Still, there are visual clicks that make him blend in, and his puzzling charm is worth studied by the 16th-century conquistador's.

Interconnected

The first time-separated pair—Tomas, Izzi, Tommy, Tom—are creatively interconnected and strongly personified by Jackman, but other words to read the production notes to make sense of the whole disconnected thing.

The special effects-aided imagery and the time-hopping narrative make Aronofsky's story confusing. On the one hand, "The Fountain" challenges its viewers to think; on the other, one can't vaguely get that it's about acceptance and letting go. One is left with little more to do than scratch one's head.





Having worked with the very best ...

EDDIE ROMERO HAS WORKED with the very best and the very famous—Brits Alexa Ann to Martin Sheen, from Gerry de Leon to Francis Ford Coppola.

Romero was overall Philippine coordinator when Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" was shot in the country in 1976.

DID YOU KNOW...

He, the act is Laguna that was scouted by a typhoon. Rumors that the great Marlon Brando, Romero recalled, "I talked to him a few times—purely routine. People said he was a bully to me. But I think he was only difficult with the big shots. With working with like me, he was cool."

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ON THE set of "Faces of Love" with Christopher de Leon, second from right and Angel Aquino, right.

Faces of a filmmaker

TAKE FIVE

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

National Artist for Film Eddie Romero insists he is just an observer, at best just a storyteller

EDDIE ROMERO

ACCORDING TO SON JOEY ROMERO, Eddie Romero, National Artist for Film and (the Honorable) Arts, seemed "inspired," charged with excitement while shooting his "comeback" film, "Faces of Love."

The last movie that the elder Romero directed was the 1 Old Enrique Belen, "A Case of Honor," starring Timothy Bottoms and John Philip Law, and "Whitehorse," top-billed by Sam J. Jones and Timothy Hughes.

A year before he worked on those, Romero had mugged the Filipino film, "Kasi sa Hati, Labo sa Galit (Dog and Emperor)," a co-production with China that featured Vic Wegas and Gang Palang in lead roles.

Two decades has passed since "Hati," yet the 82-year-old filmmaker seems he's in "no hurry."

Between 1987 and 2007, Romero occupied himself with TV projects (most notably, "Sobrang Tatagasa," the mini-series, in 1992).

What inspired him to make this return to the big screens? Was it digital technology which is said to make movie-making easier?

He puts it simply: "I just wanted to see my relatives from the National Government for Cultures and the arts (NCCA)."

On the set of "Faces," he reportedly maintained a relaxed, even playful mood.

Even with a mini, 35 camera (best known up to film, "Rocky," which opens nationwide on Wednesday, was graded A by the German Federation Board).

The Film Development Council of the Philippines and the Department of Education, through Undersecretary Yilma Lalmedo, a launching a movie review-writing contest with "Faces" as subject, for elementary and high-school students and teachers.

What was the shift in digital like?

It wasn't so much about the cost because if you are shooting on HD (high-definition digital camera), the difference is not that big. But getting digital is so much more convenient. The cameras and other equipment are so much lighter. Set ups are quicker, lighting, easier. Before we submitted the product for film transfer, we corrected the flaws (in sound and color grading) and before it was printed on 35mm film, the post-production house (Studiopost) made further corrections. In the end, we get the best possible film transfer.

This is your fourth film with Christopher de Leon (after "Guerilla Royal Pieces, Pinoy Kayo Bigueras," "Aguila" and "Kamkaminari"). Is he your favorite actor?

Not really. It's just that I seem to watch characters that are perfect for him. I didn't really think of him (while I was writing the script with Rica Arevalo), but then Arcadio (the hero of "Faces") casts him.

What was the shoot like?

It was a lot of fun. I heard the actors saying in interviews that they never imagined it would be so easy working with me.

Well, I had gone into motion pictures because I didn't like regular work. I wanted to play. Do my own, there is very little stress, if any.

In my entire career, I've never had a hard time with actors. Nasa in the heyday of Leopoldo Salcedo and Carmen Rosales, who were supposed to be temperamental, I never had any problem.

What is your directing style?

I just talk to the actors about the characters they are playing. If they have a suggestion, I discuss it with them. Then, we shoot. If they are not content with the take, I re-shoot. But then I haven't done. After the re-take, I tell them that the first shot was fantastic!

Apart from NCCA and CEB grants and subsidies, what else could help filmmakers?

In my opinion, there is a need to classify the movies so as to control industry. With so much issue, we cannot be competitive. Even before a movie opens, turns—or film noir, by example— are already imposed. After a movie's run, even before a producer can recoup his investment, he's once again levied (assessment tax).

What will it take to declare the movies an essential industry?

An act of Congress. There we can ask for certain exemptions, like the tax on film stock—about 40 percent of its cost goes to taxes.

What can make moviegoers troop back to theaters?

The composition of the movie audience has changed. It's no longer the lower economic classes, younger, middle class people go to the movies now. The mass would rather buy (pirated) DVDs. It's cheaper that way. My target audience has always been the middle class because my cultural framework is very different from that of the C and E crowd.

Your movies speak to the middle class?

I always say that if there is a message in my movies, you have to look for it yourself. I consider myself as observer, not as advocate. My only goal is to be true to my characters. It's up to the audience to decide whether they are good or bad. I am just an observer and storyteller.

What's your dream project?

I wrote this story, called "Bago Sumikat ang Araw," four years ago. It's a love story set in the Kalayaan resolution and the conflict between Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo, as backdrop. It's a period film; it will cost a lot. Until I get funding, this film is just an idle speculation. Ha-ha-ha!

"RABUL Express"

Afghanistan's first post-Taliban movie

DIRECTOR BABIE IGNACIO "BABIE EXPRESS" tells the story of five people from different walks of life whose paths were destined to cross in a country devastated by war.

The movie is set in post-9/11 Afghanistan. The American bombing has crushed the Taliban regime, whose fugitive soldiers are thus trying to escape to Pakistan.

Against this turbulent backdrop, Jai and Isabel—two Indian television reporters—have entered the country, with the aim of getting a rare interview with a Taliban.

Helping them in their pursuit is their Afghan guide, translator and driver, Rhylan, in his Toyota Jeep called Rahul Express.

The movie stars Arshad Warsi, John Abraham, Salman Shahid, Hanif Hoangkoon and Linda Arsenio.

It will be shown from July 25 to 27, Sigue Sigue cinema houses, at the Robinsons Galleria in Ortigas Center.